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# G A Z E T T E E R

## O F T H E

# H O O G H L Y D I S T R I C T.

### CHAPTER I.

#### PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

THE district of Hooghly forms part of the Burdwan Division, and lies between  $22^{\circ} 36'$  and  $23^{\circ} 14'$  north latitude, and between  $87^{\circ} 30'$  and  $88^{\circ} 30'$  east longitude. It extends over 1,189 square miles, and, at the census of 1911, contained a population of 1,090,097 persons.\* In area it is slightly smaller than Gloucestershire, while its population is double that of Surrey.† The district headquarters are at Hooghly, situated on the right bank of the river; Hooghly in  $22^{\circ} 55'$  north latitude and  $88^{\circ} 24'$  east longitude. The name Hooghly is probably derived from the *hoglā* (*Typha elephantina*),‡ a tall reed which grows in abundance on the river banks and in the marshy lowlands below them.

The district is bounded on the north by the district of Burdwan; on the east by the river Hooghly; on the south by the district of Howrah; and on the west by the districts of Midnapore, Bankura and Burdwan. The boundaries on three sides are, except for short distances, artificial, but there is a natural boundary on the east, where the river Hooghly separates the district from the Rārdāghāt subdivision of the Nadā district and the Barrackpore subdivision of the 24-Parganas.

\* In 1901 the area of the district was 1,191 square miles, with a population of 1,040,262, but some villages were subsequently transferred to the Burdwan district.

† Statesman's Year Book, 1911.

‡ H. Blochmann, J. A. S. B., 1873, page 217, note.

Con-  
figura-  
tion.

In shape the district resembles an irregular parallelogram with a triangular projection on the extreme west beyond the Dwārakeswar river. The portion lying between the Hooghly and the Dwārakeswar is a flat alluvial plain intersected by a number of sluggish rivers and streams. The monotony of the dead level is broken by the raised village sites and high river banks; by a sandy ridge, 10 or 12 feet high, east of the Dwārakeswar which runs close to, and was probably thrown up by the Kānā Dwārakeswar; by artificial river embankments, and by a high *jāngāl* or embankment from Tribeni to Mahānād. Between the rivers are a number of saucer-shaped depressions, which, according to their level, form extensive marshes or still more extensive stretches of rice fields. These depressions receive the drainage of the surrounding lands, and in the rains discharge their contents by small channels into the larger streams. Such is the general appearance of this tract, but in reality the country slopes gradually from the north and west towards the south and east; slight as the slope is, it is clearly indicated by the courses of the rivers, streams and drainage channels. Along the bank of the Hooghly from Bagah near Jiret to Ghusuri near Howrah, the fall is from 26½ feet to 20 feet or only 2¼ inches per mile; along the Dāmodar from Korah to Paapur it is about 27½ feet or a foot per mile; and along the Dwārakeswar, from Puyā to near Ghosepur, it is about 40 feet or a foot and a half per mile. The rise from east to west may be gathered from the fact that Chāmpādāngā on the Dāmodar is 8 feet and Arāmbāgh 22½ feet higher than Baidyabāti on the Hooghly.

NATURAL  
DIVI-  
SIONS.  
Uplands

In the triangular portion west of the Dwārakeswar there is a noticeable change. The slope of the country is more marked; the ground becomes slightly undulating; and the soil is rather rocky, debris of low laterite being found mixed with alluvium. The westernmost corner comprised in the Badanganj outpost is distinctly rocky, being in fact a continuation, at a lower elevation, of the uplands of Bishnupur. In this part of the district the general slope is from north-west to south-east; and the country is drained by a number of small streams, of which the Amodar Khāl and the Tārājuli Khāl are the chief. Swamps and low rice fields become less frequent, while patches of scrub jungle, tenanted by leopards and other wild animals, appear, here and there.

For practical purposes, the district may be regarded as containing two main natural divisions, the plains and the uplands, the river Dwārakeswar forming the dividing line. The uplands are all comprised in thāna Goghāt, which has an area of 146 square miles or less than one-eighth of the district area. Here

there is a perceptible rise in the surface, the drainage of which is carried off by numerous small streams. They all ultimately debouch into the Dwārakeswar, and all have the usual characteristics of hill streams. They have a rapid current rising suddenly and falling as suddenly, they are generally dry after the rains, and they have sandy beds.

The remainder of the district presents several varieties of *Chars*. deltaic formation. First, the big rivers are busy throwing up *chars* year after year, a process of land formation which is best seen in the Hooghly. Its deep stream is constantly varying its course, now swinging to the left and now to the right, cutting away the bank on one side and rebuilding it on the other, and all the while forming islands or banks on the sides or in the middle of its bed. Successive floods and deposits of silt or sand add to the latter, and thus gradually raise the *chars* permanently above flood-level; or they sweep away the mobile deposits until no trace of the *char* is visible. This work of alluviation and diluviation goes on chiefly at the river bends or at the point of confluence with other streams, where the current is obstructed or becomes sluggish. For example, in the large bend between Guptiparā and Sukhsāgar, or at its confluence with the Kunti at Nayāsarai, numerous *chars* have been thrown up, and the deep mid-stream is frequently changing and incidentally furnishing a fruitful source of litigation.

Further inland, between the Dāmodar and the Dwārakeswar, *Lowlands*. there is a tract of low-lying land, which, unless protected by embankments, is more or less liable to constant floods, as the boundary rivers, with their connected streams, are gradually raising their beds by annual deposits of silt and sand. In the rains this tract becomes a sheet of water, from which the village sites stand out like small islands. Owing to its liability to submersion, cultivation is precarious. The peasant cannot count with certainty on getting a good crop of winter rice; no upland crops, such as jute, *dur* rice, or vegetables, can be safely grown; and roads cannot be properly kept up. The smaller streams also come down in flood, and frequently change their courses, intertwining with one another in the lower parts of their courses in the most unexpected way. They also add to the general uncertainty of the crops, for if they deposit alluvial silt, excellent *rabi* crops are raised, but if sand, the land becomes sterile. In thānas Arāmbagh and Khānkul, covering an area of 261 square miles, these conditions add considerably to the difficulties of administration, direct postal communication with Hooghly being often interrupted in the rains. The general effect, however, is

that the land level is being slowly raised, and in time the greater part will probably be raised so high as to be above ordinary floods.

In the tract bounded by the Hooghly and the Dāmodar the rivers are restrained by embankments, and, the level of the country being somewhat higher, the crops are fairly secure against floods. This area can be broadly divided into two sections, the high riparian strips of land along the banks of the rivers and the saucer-shaped depressions between them. The former are more or less occupied by village sites or high lands growing jute, autumn rice or vegetables. The depressions are turned into extensive rice fields, or, if still lower in level, form long marshes. These marshy depressions are especially numerous in the Serampore subdivision, being found between the Hooghly and the Saraswati (i.e. the Dānkuni marsh), between the Saraswati and the Kausiki, between the Kausiki and Kānā Dāmodar, and between the Kānā Dāmodar and the main channel of the Dāmodar. Another peculiarity is that most of the smaller streams have more or less silted up and have no visible outfall—a fact which accounts for the frequency with which the name *kānd* (one-eyed) is applied to them. Such silting up is particularly noticeable in the Hooghly subdivision above the Kānā Nadi. Numerous small channels drain this tract during the rains, but they are so much silted up, that there is no current after the cessation of the monsoon. The stream is then represented by a succession of stagnant pools in the deeper parts of its bed, while the land, being undrained except by percolation, becomes water-logged. Thānas Polbā, Dhaniākhālī and Panduā, furnish numerous instances of this feature of the river system.

#### SCENERY.

The scenery on the upper reaches of the Hooghly has a quiet, if somewhat monotonous, beauty, its bank being lined with *ghāts*, orchards, white-washed houses and temples, interspersed with clumps of bamboos, palms and other trees. In the lower reaches, however, each bend of the river seems to open up a fresh vista of modern mills, and the impression of commercial and industrial activity which these convey is confirmed by the river-borne traffic of steamers and launches, barges moving slowly along, large boats, of a model centuries old, with flimsy sails outspread, and small skiffs (*pānns*) going from bank to bank. Above Tribeni the quieter village life predominates—men bathing, women going up and down the bank with water-jars, boats moored alongside or plying on the river. The bank itself is lined with palms, bamboos and mango trees; while the *chars* are covered with splendid crops of vegetables, tobacco or mustard. In the interior, the same scene is reproduced on a smaller scale of all the



larger waterways: Away from the riverside every village is surrounded by groves of mangoes and bamboos, with feathery palms and tall coconuts rising above them. This belt of vegetation is ringed round by fields of jute or autumn rice; and in the lower levels are wide stretches of green winter rice spreading down to the edges of muddy reed-covered marshes. Occasionally during the rainy season, after very heavy rain, the marsh water rises to the level of the villages, sometimes even overflowing into them; and the whole countryside is converted into a sheet of water, communication being kept up by boats or by means of paths over the embankments and the boundaries of the fields.

In the uplands of Goghāt thāna the scenery changes. The land becomes undulating and is less liable to floods. The luxuriant groves and thick undergrowth give place to scrub-jungle and clumps of larger trees; the depressions are fewer, and the fields of winter rice less common; the streams have sandy beds and a rapid course; the villages are fewer and more sparsely populated. As one proceeds further west, the scenery grows more picturesque, and furnishes a contrast to the somewhat monotonous scenery of the plain which occupies the remainder of the district.

The district is mainly the product of its rivers, and is still <sup>RIVER</sup> watered, drained and partially changed by them. Hence for a <sup>SYSTEM.</sup> correct knowledge of its physiography, as well as of its economic and sanitary conditions, a description of the river system is of no little importance. Under this term are included, first, the large rivers, secondly, the smaller streams, and lastly, the village channels. The large rivers are four in number, viz., the Hooghly, forming the eastern boundary, the Dāmodar separating the Serampore subdivision from the Arāmbāgh thāna, the Dwarakeswar forming the dividing line between the latter, and the Goghāt thāna, and its continuation, the Rūpnārāyan, forming the south-western boundary for many miles. The smaller streams, as a rule, flow from north to south and are either the offshoots or tributaries of the big rivers. They are fairly numerous, and form the main drainage channels of the district. Among them may be mentioned the Behulā, the Kānā Nadi, the Kunti Nadi (also called the Magrā Khāl or Kānā Nadi), the Saraswatī, the Kausikī, the Kanṭul with the Gopālnagar, the Khis with the Julkā, the Kānā Dāmodār, the Madariā, the Besiā or Sāukibhāngā, the Mundeswari, the Kānā Dwarakeswar, the Sānkṛā, the Jhumjhumī, the Amodar and the Tāfājuli. Lastly, there are the village channels draining the village low lands, which in the rains usually join the larger streams or discharge their waters into one or other of them, but are often so silted up as to have no visible outfall. After

the rains their water is lost mainly by percolation, all that is left being stagnant pools in the deeper portions of the river beds.

The western bank of the Hooghly is high and, where not occupied by houses, is covered by thick vegetation, except where *chars* have been thrown up. The Dāmodār is embanked all along its eastern bank and is low-lying on the opposite side. The Dwārakeswar is bounded on the west by the uplands and southwards from Bali Diwāganj by embankments, with the result that floods are confined to the river bed and the low-lying Arāmbāgh and Khānākul thānas. In the western part of the Hooghly and Serampore subdivisions the narrow silted-up channels are unable to carry off with sufficient rapidity the volume of water which pours into them in times of heavy rain. They consequently overflow, causing considerable damage to the crops in thānas Kristanagar and Chanditalā in the Serampore subdivision, and lower down in thāna Jagatballabhpur and the eastern part of thāna Amta in the Howrah district.

Hooghly.

The Hooghly river, or, as it should be more correctly described, the Bhāgirathi branch of the Ganges, has three distinct sections, the upper section from the point of bifurcation to its confluence with the Jalangi at Nadiā, the central section from Nadiā to its confluence with the Rūpnārāyan at Hooghly Point, and the lower section from Hooghly Point to the sea. The central section is a little more than 120 miles long, of which 50 miles lie along the eastern boundary of Hooghly district. The river first touches the district opposite Sāntipur, below which it turns to the south-east past Guptipārā, Balāgarh, Jiret and Sukhsāgar (in the Nadiā district), forming several large *chars* as it swings from one side to the other. From Sukhsāgar it runs south-west to Tribeni and then nearly south up to Hooghly town and Chinsura, after which it follows a southerly course, winding alternately from west to east, until Māheśh is touched. The river then flows nearly south up to the outfall of the Bally Khāl, which is part of the southern boundary of Hooghly. The channel narrows from south to north, being in the winter months about three-quarters of a mile wide opposite Uttarpārā, half that width at Hooghly and Bānaberā, and a little less than half of it at Guptipārā. In the rains, when the *chars* and islands are submerged, it becomes more than a mile wide and as much as a mile and half at Uttarpārā. In the summer the river shrinks much in breadth, and the height of water falls considerably. It is navigable by large boats and river steamers throughout the year; but in the hot weather navigation is precarious for river steamers in the northern reaches, as the depth of water falls

to 6 feet, and the channel, winding rapidly from east to west through the *chars* and *jaldas*, is very tortuous.

The mean level of the water is affected not only by floods, but also by tides and bores. During the freshet months, *i.e.*, July to September, such a volume of water is brought down that no tide is felt, and the current is known as *ek-tānā* or one-sided. In the dry season the upward tidal stream and the tidal rise and fall are felt distinctly throughout this portion of its course. The high water of the spring tides comes up to Chinsura between three and four in the afternoon. Its velocity, which at Calcutta is 18 miles an hour, diminishes as it advances northwards. The difference between low and high water is 7 to 8 feet at Chinsura, the difference between neap and spring tides being 3 to 4 feet. Further up, the rise becomes smaller and smaller. Bores occur in the hot months (March to May) at perigee springs, with more or less violence, according as tidal conditions are favourable or not and the southerly breezes are strong or feeble. The bore diminishes in force in its passage up from Calcutta, and at its highest may be 2 feet high at Chinsura.

The banks are generally sloping and closely cultivated. Sandy *chars* have been formed on both sides of the river, *e.g.*, at Guptipārā, Balagarh, Jiret, Bandel, Bhadreswar, Baidyabāti and Maheah. These *chars* are generally uncultivated, being covered with grass, and often impede navigation in the hot weather months. There are also several islands in the bed of the river above Bānsberīā, *e.g.*, at Tribenī, Nayāsarai, between Jiret and Balāgarh, and opposite Chāgda and Guptipārā. Fine *rabi* crops are grown on them, and vegetables, especially *potatoes* and water melons, are cultivated for export to the Calcutta market. Some of these islands must have been formed long ago to judge from the old trees and villages on them.

The following streams join the river Hooghly from the west, *viz.*, (1) the Behulā, (2) Kānā Nadi, (3) Kunti Nadi or Magrā Khāl, (4) Baidyabāti Khāl, (5) Serampore Khāl, and (6) Bally Khāl. The Saraswati branches off from it below Tribenī and rejoins it lower down at Sankrāl in the Howrah district. These are now small streams and add little to the body of water in the Hooghly.

The next large river is the Dāmodar, which in some respects is <sup>Dāmodar.</sup> even more important than the Hooghly. It enters the district from the north between the villages of Shāhpur and Habibpur, and flows south, winding alternately from west to east and separating the Arāmbagh subdivision from the rest of the district. From above Bājpalhat it forms the boundary between this district

and Howrah, and then passes southward through the latter district. Including 8 miles along the boundary, the total length of the river in Hooghly is about 28 miles.

In the upper portion of its course the Dāmodar has a rapid flow and brings down vast quantities of silt from the Chotā Nāgpur plateau. It leaves the Hazāribāgh district at a height of only 582 feet above sea-level, and it has a length of over 250 miles from this point till its confluence with the Hooghly. In its lower reaches, therefore, it assumes a deltaic character, throwing off distributaries instead of receiving affluents. Formerly its flood volume, passing along these branches, as well as down its main channel, overspread a large part of Hooghly and Howrah; but most of them have now more or less silted up, while the Dāmodar itself is restrained on the east side by a high embankment. The result is that its ravages have in recent years been confined to a limited tract on the west, but their effects in this tract have been intensified. After very heavy rainfall, moreover, it often threatens to overtop or breach the embankment, and causes no little anxiety. Not only is it justly dreaded for its destructive floods, but it is also notorious for the frequency with which it changes its course. The changes will be described later in this chapter.

The bed of the Dāmodar is sandy and averages half-a-mile in width. It is fordable at many places in the hot and cold seasons, and is then not navigable by boats. In the rains it is nowhere fordable, and a few country boats go down stream with cargoes of rice. Since the formation of a breach in the western bank at Beguā in the Burdwān district, a large quantity of its water has been diverted to the Mundeswari through a new *khāl* known as the Besiā Khāl, so that the main channel has shrunk perceptibly in size and volume. In this portion of its course the river is too far off from the sea to be affected by tides or bores. No islands have been formed in its bed; but several sandy grass-covered *chars* have been thrown up on either bank, some of which are under cultivation. The banks are well-defined, and vary from 10 to 15 feet in height. Cultivation often extends up to their margin, but on the west, as far as the Besiā Khāl, the land is largely covered with sand or otherwise rendered uncultivable for a width of about 2 miles. When silt is deposited and the water can be easily drained off, rich *rabi* crops are raised.

Dwārakeswar.

The third large river, the Dwārakeswar, enters the district between the villages of Mandalghāti and Mahisri and forms its north-western boundary for 7 miles, separating the Goghat thāna first from the Bishnupur subdivision of Bānkurā and next from

the headquarters subdivision of Burdwān. After flowing for 14 miles through the district, it divides into two branches a mile below Bāli Diwānganj. The western branch, called the Jhumjumi, after a course of 3 miles, enters the Ghātāl subdivision of Midnapore and falls into the Silāi; while a minor tributary, turning east, reunites with the Sankrā, some few miles above Bandar. The eastern branch, the Sankrā, flows south-east through the Arāmbāgh and Khānākul thānas, is next joined by a tributary of the Jhumjumi, and lower down, at Bandar, unites with the Silāi to form the Rūpnārāyan.

The bed of the Dwārakeswar, as well as of its branches, is sandy, and varies from half a mile to a quarter of a mile in width. It is navigable only in the rains, when large country boats pass up and down to the Rūpnārāyan. During the remainder of the year it is fordable at most places; and in the hot weather a bamboo foot-bridge is thrown across it at Arāmbāgh town. The river is not embanked in the northern part; but the banks are fairly high, varying from 6 to 15 feet. From Bāli on the west and from Mubārakpur on the east there are embankments for some seven miles; while two more embankments extend from the point at which it bifurcates, joining one another a little above Chāpsā. The eastern embankment from Mubārakpur has been breached in several places and gives little protection to the villages on that side. Several sandy *chars* have been thrown up on either bank, which, as a rule, are uncultivated except near Arāmbāgh town.

The Rūpnārāyan is formed by the junction of the Silāi with the branches of the Dwārakeswar near Bandar. It runs south-east for 8 miles, forming the district boundary, and is joined at the extreme south-east, opposite Rānichak, by the Kānā Dwārakeswar. The junction is not shewn in the survey map. The tide runs up as far as Bandar; and the river is navigable throughout by boats of three to four tons burden and by small inland steamers.

Among the smaller streams several may be mentioned. The Gāngan or Behulā rises in the Burdwān district, touches this district below Baddipur (in the Kālnā subdivision), and then divides into two branches, both called Behulā. The northern branch after a circuitous course falls into the Hooghly near Somrā. The southern branch cuts across the district and falls into the Magrā Khāl half-a mile west of Nayāsarai. This stream has a muddy bed and is probably a remnant of one of the old courses of the Dāmodar.

The Kunti Nadi branches off from the Dāmodar just below Salimābād in the Burdwān district, and flows south-east to Kunti or Kānā Nadi.

Bandipur and then east to Gopālnagar. Then, curiously enough, it turns north-east, running nearly parallel to the Saraswatī, till it falls into the Hooghly at Nayāsarāi after describing a complete semicircle. The upper part is known as the Kānā Nadi, and is flushed annually from the Eden Canal; the central part is known as the Kuntī Nadi; and the lower reach for a few miles as the Magrā Khāl. It has some flow of water all the year round, and large country boats go up from Nayāsarāi to Rājhat, a distance of 8 miles. In old days this stream apparently formed a main channel of the Dāmodar for some time. It is joined near Ukli in its north-eastward journey by the Ghiā, which is fed from the north by the Kantul and Gopālnagar streams, and from the south by the Julkā, all three draining thāna Dhaniakhali. The stream has, altogether a length of 50 miles, of which 44 miles are in the Hooghly district.

**Saraswatī** The Saraswatī branches out from the Hooghly below Tribeni. It flows at first south-east for a mile and a half, and then runs south, parallel to and within three miles of the main river. Behind Chandernagore it curves to the south-west up to the village of Burai, west of Serampore town, and then goes south east till it enters Howrah district, rejoining the Hooghly above Sānkrail. Below Tribeni the river is only 10 or 12 feet wide and a foot deep in the hot weather, but in the rains its width increases to a quarter of a mile and its depth to about 10 feet. Half a century ago it was a dead river, represented merely by a chain of pools; but water was let into it in connection with the Eden Canal scheme, by a cut from the Kānā Nadi near Gopālnagar; and it is now even in the summer a running, though tiny, stream. Though much silted up, its banks are fairly high (10 to 15 feet) and are still densely populated, specially in the south, where there are several large villages, such as Burai, Bāksā, Janāi, Chanditalā and Kālipur.

**Bālī Khāl.** Below Tribeni several creeks fall into the Hooghly after draining the interior. The southernmost of them is the Bālī (Bally) Khāl, which forms the southern boundary of the district for several miles. It drains the Dānkuni marsh, and is now used as the outfall of the Dānkuni drainage channel. In its lower reaches it is navigable throughout the year by boats of fair size, and is not fordable. Both the bed and banks are clayey, and furnish excellent material for the manufacture of bricks.

**Kānā Dāmodar.** The western part of the Hooghly and Serampore subdivisions is drained by several streams, apparently all offshoots of the Dāmodar. One of these, the Kānā Dāmodar, was apparently

once a large channel. It branched off from the Dāmodar a few miles below Salimābād in the Burdwān district, but its mouth is now more or less silted up. It is flushed yearly, however, from the Eden Canal. Flowing south, it is joined south-east of Kristanagar by the Kausikī, the reclamation of which has recently been taken up by Government with the help of private contributions. The combined stream then passes into the Howrah district past Jagatballabhpur, and falls into the Hooghly at Sijberia, a mile above Uluberia. In this portion of its course the stream, which is known as the Kālsāpā or Kānsōna Khāl, has been converted into the outfall of the Rājāpur Drainage Channel.

The Madāriā Khāl rises north of Chāmpādānga and passing into the Howrah district falls into the Damodar above Amta town. In its course through Hooghly it is called the Rānābandā. Recently, its overflow having caused much damage to crops near Amtā, the embankment along it has been raised and strengthened. Originally this stream appears to have debouched from the Dāmodar, but its intake has been closed by the embankment along its western bank.

Between the Dāmodar and the Dwārakeswar lie the Besiā Khāl, the Mundeswari, and the Kānā Dwārakeswar or Dhalkisor. The Besiā Khāl has been scoured out by the Dāmodar pouring through the breach at Begnā in the Burdwān district. It flows south through Arāmbagh thana, nearly parallel to and within two miles of the main Dāmodar and falls into the Mundeswari above Harinkholā. It is not shown on the survey map, but its destructive floods spread from the Mundeswari on the west to the Dāmodar on the east.

The Mundeswari rises in the Burdwān district, and flows south-east till joined by the Besiā Khāl above Harinkholā, where it crosses the old Benares Road. It then flows southwards and falls into the Kānā Dwārakeswar at Hayātpur. At its junction with the Besiā Khāl it is, in the cold weather, 20 yards wide and between 2 to 3 feet deep; while at Hayātpur it attains a width of 60 yards with a depth of 4 to 6 feet. It is fordable above Hayātpur after the rains, but small canoes ply up to Harinkholā throughout the year.

The Kānā Dwārakeswar or Dhalkishor branches off from the main Dwārakeswar at Chāndur, 2 miles above Arāmbagh town, and then flows south-east until it joins the Mundeswari at Hayātpur. The combined stream, under the name of the Kānā Nadi, turns south-west up to Khānākul, and then south, falling into the Rūpnārāyan opposite Rānichak. It has almost silted up at its intake, and where it is crossed by the old Benares Road, is nearly



dry during the winter months. Below Basantapur it increases in size, and, where crossed by the Māyāpur-Khānākul Road, is a sluggish swampy stream some 20 feet broad and 2 feet deep. At Hayatpur, before its junction with the Mundeswari, it is about 20 yards broad; but at Sikandarpur, 3 miles further down, it is some 60 yards wide with a depth of 5 or 6 feet in the cold weather. Below Khānākul it is not fordable, and large boats can go up to that place from the Rūpnārāyan in the rains and early winter; while smaller boats ply above Hayātpur throughout the year. The southerly portion of its course from Khānākul to Rānichak is not shewn on the survey map.

Amodar  
and Tārā-  
juli Khāl.

The Amodar is a small stream which, coming from the Bānkurā district, flows south-east through Goghāt thāna, past Bhitargarh or Garh Mandāran, and is joined by the Tārājuli Khāl at the district boundary. The combined stream passes through the Ghātal subdivision and falls into the Jhumjhumī branch of the Dwārakeswar river. The Amodar is not shewn in any old map, but it is mentioned in the introduction to the Bengali poem *Chandi* as having been crossed by the author in his journey from his home in Burdwān to the Midnapore district.

The Tārājuli Khāl also rises in the Bānkurā district, and skirting the south-western boundary of the Hooghly district, joins the Amodar 6 miles below Hājipur. Both these streams have the usual characteristics of hill streams, viz., a quick current, banks of hard soil and gravelly beds. Except in the rains, they are fordable throughout the year.

CHANGES  
IN THE  
RIVER  
COURSES.

Even during the few centuries for which records are available, there have been many great changes in the courses of the rivers in this riverain district. In the river Hooghly the north-eastern portion of its course has been specially affected. Here several *chars* have formed, and the channel has shifted eastwards and become more and more tortuous. The map of Stavorinus (1769), for example, showed Guptipārā to the east of the Ganges, whereas it now lies west of the main channel, the river, which apparently once flowed just below this village, having receded a mile eastwards. One main cause of this diversion to the east was the shrinkage of the Jalangi or Khāri, once a large river which discharged a large volume of water into the Hooghly and so kept its course fairly well to the south. Now that the Jalangi has diminished in size and volume, the Hooghly is tracking more and more to the east, and is encroaching steadily on the Nadia side. Lower down there have been some changes in the *chars*, of which one may specially be noticed. In the seventies of last century an island was formed opposite Sānderwartālā below



the college at Ohinsura. It grew in size, and trees also sprung up on it, but it was swept away one night in the rainy season of 1898.

There is a general impression that the central section of the Hooghly has grown shallower. Of its depth before large European vessels began to go up it we have no record. The earliest mention of its depth by an European appears to be that of Cesare Federici, who remarked (1580 A. D.):—"From thence Bator upwards the ships doe not goe, because that upwards the river is very shallowe and little water"; but, he adds -"In the port of Satagan every yeere lade thirtie or five and thirtie ships great and small". According to a Muhammadan account, the Portuguese in 1632 had a large vessel with nearly two thousand persons on board moored in the river off Hooghly town. Again, in a letter of the Court of Directors to Fort St. George, Madras, dated 31st December 1662, it is stated:—"We take notice that Captain Elliott hath left a writeing with you that it is hazardous to goe up for Hugely and that the Dutch have shippes of 600 tons that Tyde it up thither." Besides this, we know that in the latter half of the 17th century, ships, like the *Falcon*, and large sloops, like the *Arriwall* and the *Ganges*, came up to the English factory at the same place. Bowrey's Chart and the Pilot Chart (1688 and 1703) shew 4 fathoms of water at Hooghly gradually increasing to  $5\frac{1}{4}$  or 6 fathoms opposite Baranagar. In March 1757, the three largest ships of the Company's navy, with 50 to 70 guns, sailed up to Chandernagore, though on a high tide. All these facts go to show that the depth of water has really been decreasing. This decrease may be partly due to the silting up of the bed and partly to the diminished supply of water which it receives from its own intake and also from its tributaries, like the Jalangi and the Dāmodar.

The changes in the Saraswati are still more marked. The place where the three streams branch off (Tribeni, i.e., three-brained) is described in a Sanskrit poem, *Paranadātam*, as far back as the 12th century A. D.; it is also mentioned, with a slight change of name, in Muhammadan inscriptions and books of the 13th century and later; and it is shown as a large stream in maps as late as that of Valentijn (based on information gathered in 1660-70). It is a mistake, however, to suppose that it formed the main channel of the Hooghly, though country boats and small sloops undoubtedly used it for inland traffic, as on its banks lay, and still lie, populous villages. Apparently, it formerly received water from the Kānā Nadi through a small branch taking off near Ukli, but it gradually silted up, until in

Rennell's time (1779-81) it had dwindled down to a small stream, and, except for a few miles, had become a dead river unnavigable after the rains. Lately, some water has been let in by a cut from the Kānā Nadi, but not enough to permit the passage of cargo boats throughout its length.

**Dāmodar.** The changes in the course of the Dāmodar have been not only numerous, but also important in view of the effect they have had on the history not only of Hooghly district, but also of Howrah and Burdwan. They can be only briefly touched upon here. Beginning from the north, one of its old branches was the Bānkā, which now rises in thāna Galsi, flows past Burdwan town, and falls into the Khāri, which in its turn joins the Bhāgirathi 6 miles above Kālnā. Rennell's Atlas shows the Bānkā as branching off from the Dāmodar, a little south-west of Burdwan, town and falling into the Khāri, and then into the Bhāgirathi above Kālnā as at present; while, after the junction with the Khāri, a branch (evidently the present Behulā I) went southwards, debouching lower down above Balāgarh. In Valentijn's map (*circa* 1670) a large stream branched off from the Dāmodar some distance below Burdwan and above "Silimath" (Salimabad), and going north-east fell into the Bhāgirathi above "Amboc" (Ambikā Kālnā). Judging from the position of its outfall, this was most probably the old course of the Bānkā.

**Nayāsarāi Branches.** The most important of the old channels by which the Dāmodar found its way into the Hooghly were at Nayāsarāi, 3 miles above Tribeni. Here traces of at least three channels can still be found. The northernmost and shortest channel seems to have passed north of the old village of Kulingrām and then south-east to Nayāsarāi, south of Boichi Panduā and Khanyan. The middle channel, which was probably next in point of time, flowed south of the old fort at Kulingrām, then south-east to the north of Dwārbāsini and Mahānād, up to Magrāganj, and then north-east to Nayāsarāi. The high embankment extending for 8 miles from Tribeni to Mahānād on the west was apparently raised to protect the adjoining country against its incursions. Between it and the first channel there is still a long line of marshes, called after it the Khanyān marshes, while traces of their beds are found in the Kāsai near Panduā (the first channel), and in the Kantul and Kedārmāti near Dwārbāsini. One of these two channels, probably the second, is shown in the map of De Barros (1553-1613), and also in that of Blaeu (1650), as a large stream flowing first south-east and then due east to the Bhāgirathi, south of Chaumā and north of Sātgaon. The name Chaumā still survives in that of *pergane* Chaumūhā (four-mouthed),

the *Chamuhā* of *Sarkār Sulaimānābād* in *Todar Mal's* rent-roll. The second channel is also perhaps the same as that shown in *Gastaldi's* map of Asia (dated A. D. 1561, but based on older materials) as flowing south-east and falling into the Ganges above *Sātgaon*.

Gradually, the most easterly branch of the *Dāmodar* shifted still further south and assumed the tortuous course now known as the *Kānā Nadi* probably after an intermediate diversion along the present bed of the *Ghiā*. In *Valentijn's* map the outfall of a stream is indicated above *Tribeni*, but as its whole course is not shown, it cannot be stated definitely whether it represents the mouth of the second or third channel. In *Rennell's Atlas*, however, the third channel is distinctly entered under the name "Old *Dummodah*", an epithet which shows that it had then ceased to be a main channel of the *Dāmodar*. The process of silting up was accelerated by the course it was forced to take, its easterly flow being barred by the high banks of the *Saraswatī*.

Partly for the same reason, the other channels of the *Dāmodar* assumed a southerly and in the lowest reaches south-easterly course. No southerly branch appears in *Gastaldi's* map, probably owing to imperfect knowledge of the interior; but *De Barros*, followed by *Blaev*, clearly shows a southerly branch with two mouths and some large islands between *Beter* and *Pisacoly*. The lower mouth is that of the present main channel opposite *Faltā Reach*; and the upper mouth is to be identified with that of the *Kānā Dāmodar* at *Sijberia*, a mile above *Uluberia*. In the maps and accounts of the second half of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, the lower course is named *Raspa* or *Rasphuya* and *Mandalghāt*, the former being a Dutch and the latter an Indian name. The other is shown as a larger and broader river with small islands at its mouth and is called *Jan Perdo* or *John Perdo* ("a river for great ships," according to the chart of 1701), the *Dansi Budhā* of the palm-leaf chronicles of the *Jagannath* temple of *Puri*. It would appear, therefore, that the *Kānā Dāmodar* formed the main southerly channel up to the beginning of the 18th century; its size and importance are still marked by the long marshes on both sides and by the populous villages crowded on its banks. In *Rennell's* time it had ceased to be a large stream, and its upper course was not even continued up to its source at *Salimābād*.

The present channel of the *Dāmodar* can be traced to the second half of the 16th century in *De Barros' map*, in which it is shown as one of the main channels. It could not, however, have discharged the whole or even the greater part of the

water brought down by the Dāmodar, as its capacity diminishes by more than half from the bend at Selālpur to Amtā and by one-eighth from a point 16 miles west of Burdwān to Amtā. The surplus flood-water partly spilt over the country and was partly discharged through other channels, such as the Bānkā, Kānā Nadi, Kānā Dāmodar and Madāriā Khāl on the left side, and the Mundeswarī and Kānā Dwarakeswar on the right side. Gradually, as the eastern branches silted up at their mouths, this became the main channel, but it spilt for several miles on either bank and probably widened and deepened its bed below Amtā. About 55 years ago, the left side was completely closed to spill by a high continuous embankment, while the right side was cleared by the removal of 20 miles of old embankments. After this, the river overflowed the western tract annually for a distance of several miles, till 20 years ago, when a great flood burst through the right bank at Begnā and scoured out a long channel, flowing parallel to the main stream at a distance of about 2 miles and finally swelling the volume conveyed by the Mundeswarī. The combined stream, after joining the Kānā Dwarakeswar, instead of coming eastward into the Dāmodar Khāl, has forced its way southwards and now falls into the Rūpnārāyan opposite Rānīchak. The main channel has shrunk perceptibly; while the combined stream runs wider and deeper, carrying a large influx of water into the Rūpnārāyan in the flood season.

Besā  
Branch.

Madāriā  
Khāl.

The Madāriā or Rānābandā Khāl is shown in Rennell's Atlas (1779). It now rejoins the Dāmodar above Amtā, but in Rennell's time it did so several miles lower down near Bagnān. Traces of this old course still survive in a number of *dahus* or long deep pools in its bed, and also in the present Bānapāti Khāl on the east of the Dāmodar.

Dāmodar  
Khāl.

On the west one finds in Rennell's Atlas only one large branch, viz., that debouching from opposite Rājbalhat, which threw off an offshoot towards the Kānā Dwarakeswar, and after being joined by the Kānā lower down, fell into the Dāmodar above Amtā. This is now known as the Dāmodar Khāl and its offshoot as the Gujā Khāl, but the Kānā Dwarakeswar no longer falls into it.

Mundes-  
warī.

The Mundeswarī is an old stream, which, according to his biography, was crossed by Chaitanya about 1510 A.D., and by Kavikānkan, the author of the poem *Chandi*, towards the end of the 16th century. The river is called in these works the Mantreswar and the Mudai. In Valentijn's map the combined stream of the Mundeswarī and Kānā Dwarakeswar is shown as a large river issuing from the Dāmodar above Silimath (Selimabad) and falling into the Patraghatā river (the modern Rūpnārāyan). In

Rennell's Atlas the Mundeswarī falls into the Kānā, but its upper course is not shown. In the embankment map of 1854 and the present survey map it is entered under the name "Moondasree" with two tributaries on the east, viz., the Dansālā or "Bansain" and the Sankari or "Shatkeebhanga." The stream, after receiving these two tributaries above Chanderbhan, ran south and was joined by the Gujā or Gogā Khāl; then turning south-west, it fell into the Kānā Dwārakeswar above Chingriā village. In the embankment map of 1859, prepared after the removal of the embankments on the right side of the river, a change is noticeable. Four tributaries are shown, viz., beginning from the east, the Bachurda Khāl, the Singer Khal, and two unnamed streams. The first two joined the last two above Panlahari, and the river thus formed fell into the Mundeswarī above Mālanchā, which in its turn shifted its course a mile further west, falling as before into the Kānā above Chingriā. Since the formation of the Beguā breach, a large part of the Dāmodar water has been passing through the Besiā Khāl, which may be the easternmost of its old channels. The Besiā Khal falls into the Mundeswarī a little above Harinkhola, and the united river then takes a short cut, and joins the Kānā Dwārakeswar at Hyātpur below the old semaphore tower. The influx of water from the Damodar has increased the size of the Mundeswarī, and incidentally made its bed clayey instead of sandy.

Lastly, the Dwārakeswar itself has undergone several important changes. It is shown in Valentijn's map (*circa* 1670) as flowing east of Sjanabath (Jahānabad) and Canna Coel (Khānākul), and as falling into the Patraghātā river (Rūpnarāyan). This course is evidently that of the Kānā Dwārakeswar or Dhalkishor, which after its junction with the Mundeswarī flows past Khānākul. The present course appears in Whitchurch's map (1776) with 'Jehana-bad' on the east, and 'Dewangung' and 'Gosepour' on its west. If 'Gosepour' is correctly placed, the Sankrā branch was then the main channel flowing further east. In Rennell's Atlas, however, the old Kānā alone is shown as falling into the Dāmodar Khāl, the present course being indicated only as a small channel near Rājgarh. In both the survey map and the embankment map of 1854 the present course is entered, together with the bifurcation of the river into the Jhumjhumi and the Sankrā lower down; while the old Kānā is made to join the Mundeswarī above Chingriā and then, running south-east, fall into the Dāmodar Khāl. With the removal of the right embankments, all this changed, the first map prepared (in 1859) after the removal showing a new creek running south-west from Chingriā to the Rūpnarāyan. On the

opening of the great breach at Beguā, the Mundeswarī, now much swollen in volume, joined the Kānā at Hayātpur several miles above Chingriā; and at present their united waters run southwards into the Rūpnārāyan. It may be added that the mouth by which it debouches at Chāndur is much silted up, and that the Kānā, receiving no water from the parent stream, except in the flood season, is a sluggish and shallow waterway until joined by the Mundeswarī.

As regards the present Dwārakeswai, its old course seems to have been along the Sankrā branch, according to Whitechurch; the Jhumjhumī apparently branched out subsequently, to fall into the main channel, and later on into the Silāi after a tortuous course. All these features are shown in the embankment map of 1854; and a later embankment map also shews the Sankrā as the main channel. At present both the channels seem to be of equal importance.

General  
remarks  
on the  
Dāmodar.

The oscillations of the Dāmodar and its connected streams establish one important fact, viz., that the streams have a general tendency to shift from south-east to south, and then to south-west. Another fact brought out clearly during the enquiries about the Dāmodar embankments was that the present main channel is too narrow for its flood discharge and that, consequently, spilling over the banks cannot be avoided. The maximum flood discharge of this river, which drains a catchment basin of 7,200 miles west of Burdwān, would be about 600,000 cubic feet per second; while the capacity of the channel at the Selālpur bend is only 163,681 cubic feet, at Santospur (18 miles lower down) 102,954 feet, at Serampore (23 miles from Selālpur) 95,237 feet, and at Amtā (43½ miles below Selālpur) 76,915 feet only. Hence the maintenance of complete lines of embankments on both sides, on their existing sites, was found impossible during heavy floods.

LAKES  
AND  
MARSHES.

There are no lakes in the district, but a number of large catchment basins are found in which water accumulates during the rains, forming long meres and marshes. Towards the close of the rains the lower lands are converted into swamps suitable for the cultivation of winter rice; and the lowest lands lying between the raised banks of rivers become *jhils* or extensive swamps. These *jhils* are partly drained by rivulets, but generally contain water in the dry months. The largest number of marshes is found in thānas Panduā and Polbā in the Hooghly subdivision, in thānas Chānditala and Krishnagar in the Serampore subdivision, and in thāna Khānakul in the Arāmbagh subdivision. Several marshes are of considerable size, e.g., the Khānyān marsh between the old silted-up channels of the Dāmodar in thāna Panduā, the

marsh between the Ghia and the Kānā Nadi the Dānkuni marsh between the Hooghly and the Saraswati, which is now drained by the Dānkuni drainage channel, and the marsh between the Dāmodar Khāl and the Kānā Dwārakeswar in thāna Khānākul. The reeds grown on their banks are sold for matting; and their water is used to some extent for irrigating crops of sugarcane and spring rice.

• With the exception of the Goghat thāna, the entire district is **GEOLOGY.** alluvial in formation. In the river beds sands and sandy *chars* are common, the sand being brought down from the uplands during floods and deposited wherever the stream is obstructed. The country inland has also been built up by silt deposits, the eastern part by deposits from the Hooghly, the western part of the Hooghly and Serampore subdivisions by deposits from the Dāmodar, and thānas Arāmbāgh and Khānākul by the combined deposits of the Dāmodar, the Mundeswari and the Dwārakeswar. The depth of the deposits may be realized from the fact that in a boring made at Chandernagore subangular gravel of quartz and felspar were met with at a depth of about 150 feet\*. The surface presents the general appearance of cup-shaped depressions between high river banks; but slight differences are observable in the soil. The silt deposits of the Hooghly and the Saraswati are clayey, rather stiff, not easily permeated by water, and hence hard to plough; while the silt of the Dāmodar is loamy, is easily percolated, and is, therefore, more friable. The tract further west consists of loamy alluvium with a subsoil of tenacious clay and ghuting, 10 to 30 feet thick, beneath which are found green sand or other alluvial deposits. The greater part of the Goghāt thāna is rocky, consisting of the low laterite fringe of the Bankurā uplands or of alluvium mixed with laterite débris. The only minerals extracted are laterite and *kankar* in thāna Goghāt and fine sand in the Kānā Nadi at Magrā. Limestone is said to be found along the border of the Midnapore district.

There are no forests in the district, but patches of scrub- **BOTANY.** jungle occur in thāna Goghāt, where plants characteristic of dry uplands make their appearance, such as species of *Gmelina*, *Wendlandia*, *Sitpa*, *Fragus* and *Evolvulus*, which are not found, or occur only as planted species, in the rice plain. The vegetation is, on the whole, however, somewhat sparse, lacking both the large trees of the uplands and the luxuriant undergrowth of the lowlands. The rest of the Arāmbāgh subdivision is too much cut up by rivers and creeks to permit of extensive cultivation, and has the

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\* R. D. Oldham, *Manual of the Geology of India* (1898), p. 424.



usual aquatic plants and marsh weeds common to alluvial lands. The tract between the Dāmodar and the Hooghly contains the plants generally found in Lower Bengal, both cultivated and wild. First, there are reeds, sedges and aquatic plants in the marshes and swampy rice fields; next, weeds, shrubs and smaller plants in the fields and commons a little higher up; lastly, surrounding the village itself, a belt of bamboos, cocoanuts, palms, mangoes, figs, jack and other trees. The river banks, where not occupied by houses, *g'āts* or roads, are lined with bamboos, figs, tamarisks and date-palms with thick undergrowth. The *chars*, being usually sandy, have very few trees; but where covered with silt, grow excellent *rahi* crops, and if slightly raised, rice crops. Inland, the tanks and stagnant pools are covered with lotuses, lilies, *pānā*, both large and small, and other aquatic varieties. Generally speaking, the most noticeable botanical feature of the district is the luxuriant growth of plant life natural to a soil of great natural fertility with an abundant rainfall.

#### ZOOLOGY.

#### Animals.

The domestic animals of the district include cows, buffaloes, bullocks, ponies, goats, sheep, pigs, cats, dogs, fowls, ducks and pigeons. Oxen are almost universally used for agricultural work and for draught. Goats, sheep, pigs, ducks and fowls are reared for food or for sale; and in some of the towns a few geese, turkeys and guinea-fowls. Among wild animals, leopards are fairly common in the north of the district from Palāgarh to Guptipārā, and are also found elsewhere. Stavorinus, writing about 1769-70, says that "tigers are very numerous in the woods, and often sally out into the inhabited places; there are likewise a vast number of wild buffaloes in the woods."\* Both tigers and wild buffaloes have long since disappeared, the last occasion on which a tiger is reported to have been seen being in 1830 among the ruins of Sātgaon. Monkeys abound all over the district, especially the *hanumān* or *lingur* (*Semnopithecus Entellus*). Wild hogs are common in some parts, and do a good deal of damage to crops in the Hooghly subdivision. Jackals are numerous, and other common mammals are the musk-rat, common rat, mouse, small grey-striped squirrel, civet cat, and mongoose. Hares occur in some parts, especially round Dhaniakhali, but are nowhere common. Deer have long since been exterminated. Both the ordinary small bat and the flying fox are frequent. The Gangetic porpoise (called *shusuk*) is common in the Hooghly.

\* According to the *India Gazette*, four tigers were killed near Chinsura in 1784.



From its flesh is extracted an oil, supposed to "have much efficacy in cases of rheumatism."

In the cold weather snipe, many kinds of teal and duck, and Birds. other water-fowl abound in the numerous *jhils* and swamps. Waders of many kinds are common, besides paddy birds, sand-pipers, egrets, green-shanks, etc., while vultures get a plentiful living along the banks of the Hooghly. Several kinds of kites and hawks may be seen. The common crow and many birds of fine plumage are also fairly frequent, *e.g.*, jays, kingfishers of several varieties, wood-peckers, fly-catchers, etc. Partridges are not found.

Both kinds of crocodile are found in the river Hooghly, viz., the Reptiles. *ghariāl* or long-nosed crocodile, and the snub-nosed crocodile, known as *kumbhir*; but neither is common. The iguana or *guisamp* occurs, and also some smaller lizards. A small harmless grass snake and the *dhāmin* are common; while the cobra and the *krait* are frequently seen.

Insects of all kinds, butterflies, moths, bees, ants, beetles, etc., abound. Locusts have not been known to do much damage in the district; but a flight was seen to pass over Hooghly in 1901.\*

Many kinds of fish are caught in the the rivers, marshes, Fish. fields and tanks; and the fisheries are of considerable value. Sharks also are not uncommon in the Hooghly, and occasionally seize children bathing. The following are the principal species caught for consumption. (1) Estuarine fish such as *bhetki* (*Lates calcarifer*), *hulsā* or Indian shad (*Clupea Ilisha*), *pārsē* (*Mugil Parsia*), *khayrā* (*Clupea fimbriata*) and *phasā* (*Raconda russelliana*). These come up the rivers for breeding purposes and are caught in large numbers. Mango-fish or *tapsi* (*Polynemus paradiseus*) are caught in the Hooghly river opposite the towns of Hooghly and Chinsura. (2) Of fresh-water fish found in rivers and tanks, the most valued are various members of the Indian carp family, such as *rui* (*Labeo rohita*), *kālā* (*Catla buchanani*), *mirgēl* (*Cirrhina mrigala*), *kālbāns* (*Labeo calbasu*) and *bātā* (*Labeo bātā*). Other species largely caught and sold are *chital* (*Nolopterus chital*), *saralpunti* (*Barbus sarana*), *khelae* (*Trichogaster fasciatus* and *T. chuna*), *pābdā* (*Callichorus pabā*) and *tengrā* (*Macrones tenrā*). (3) In the rice fields, and in the *jhils* and roadside drains, smaller fish are caught, such as *chānda* (*Amabassis noma*, *A. rangā*, *A. baculis*), *maurulo* (*Aspidoparia*

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\* The above account of the Fauna of the district has been contributed by the Civil Surgeon, Lt.-Col. D. G. Crawford, I.M.S.

*Morar*), *punti* (*Barbus punctus*), etc. They form valuable accessories to the scanty diet of the poorer classes. (4) Several fresh water fish thriving in muddy stagnant water are highly prized, e.g., *māgur* (*Clarius māgur*), *ko*, (*Anabus scandens*), *singi* (*Saccobranchus fossilis*), *sol* (*Ophiocephalus striatus*), and *lāla* (*Ophiocephalus punctatus*). The first three are prescribed for invalids and convalescents. (5) The rivers also abound in crustacea, especially shrimps, prawns and crabs, which are largely consumed. Oysters have not been found within the district, but other molluscs are not wanting. They are not used for food, but the shells are burnt for the manufacture of lime.

The climate of the district, on the whole, differs but little from that of Calcutta, being hot and moist. The weather is pleasantly cool, however, in the cold season, which lasts from November to February, the mean temperature falling to 65° F. in January, with a diurnal variation of 20° to 25°. During this season the prevailing winds are from the north and north-west, the mean pressure rising from 29.95 to 30.05 in December and January and falling to 30.0 in February. Much dew is precipitated in the first two months, and humidity is reduced to 60 per cent of saturation and the aqueous pressure to .450 in February. Clouds almost entirely disappear, and the rainfall is scanty, usually not exceeding an inch. After the first week of November cyclones from the sea also cease; but storms occasionally spring up from inland.

Hot  
season.

The hot season begins in March, and continues till the first week of June. The wind blows from the sea, veering from south-west to south; and the mean pressure falls slowly from 29.90 to 29.60. As the season advances, the weather grows hotter and hotter, tempered, however, in the afternoon by a fairly cool sea-breeze. The temperature rises from 80° in March to 105° in the first week of June, and both day and night grow almost equally hot, the mean diurnal variation falling to about 15° in May. Humidity and aqueous vapour pressure increase, though slowly, the mean humidity rising from between 60 and 70 per cent. in March to between 70 and 80 per cent. in May, and the mean aqueous pressure from .650 in March to .850 in May. The number of cloudy days increases, and rainfall rises to over 5 inches in May. Hailstorms occur in March and April, and a few land storms in March. Sea storms first begin to be frequent in May with some severe cyclones. Towards the end of May and the beginning of June, the sea breeze often fails, making the days sultry and the nights oppressive, this being the prelude to the burst of the south-west monsoon.

The rainy season begins with the arrival of the south-west monsoon, generally in the second week of June, and lasts till October. The wind blows steadily from the sea, veering from south to south-east; and the mean wind pressure falls from 29.60 to 29.45 in July, rising again to 29.70 in September. The air becomes somewhat cooler with the abundant rainfall, temperature falling from 105° in June to 75° to 80° in September; but the diurnal variation is small, being not more than 10°. Humidity is necessarily high, rising to 90 per cent. of saturation in July and August; and aqueous vapour pressure is higher than at any other time in the year, being .950 to 1.000 in July and .950 in the other months. Cloudy days are relatively numerous, and the rainfall heavy, the largest monthly fall, viz., over 12 inches, being recorded in July and August. Cyclones and storms form in the north-west corner of the Bay in the last three months (July to September). Though not so hot, the weather is trying and sultry from the middle of August to the middle of September, this period being vulgarly known as "*Pachā Bhāṭa*", i.e., the sodden month of Bhādra.

The south-west monsoon returns seaward between October and the first week of November. The direction of the wind changes to north, and the mean pressure, though very variable, rises to 29.90. The mean temperature falls slowly to 75°, the days are fairly hot, but the nights become cooler, the diurnal variation being 15°. Humidity is reduced, but very slowly, to 75 per cent. and the aqueous pressure to .800. Dews become heavier and more frequent at night, clouds decrease, and the monthly rainfall becomes less than 5 inches. During the retreat of the monsoon, storms and cyclones are frequent, some of the severest cyclones occurring in the last week of October and the first week of November.

The climate of thāna Goghāt differs somewhat from that sketched above and is more like that of Bānkurā. It is drier and somewhat colder, less rain also being received in the cold months. In the summer it is hotter with less of the sea-breeze, and with a small rainfall. In the monsoon season the rainfall is rather heavier, but owing to the more undulating nature of the country is more easily drained off.

The rainfall of the Hooghly district is ordinarily ample, averaging nearly .59 inches per annum. Its fluctuations are, however, considerable, varying from 42.8 inches in 1895-96 to 72.7 inches in 1900-01. The minimum recorded is a little over 39 inches in 1873 and 1874; and the maxima are over 76 inches in 1871 and over 72 inches in 1883 and 1888. The heaviest

monthly falls were in September 1900 (31·97 inches), and August 1885 (26·33 inches); while the heaviest fall on a single day (9·70 inches, was recorded on 21st September 1900

The following table shows the average rainfall at the three recording stations for the cold season, the hot season and the monsoon season, respectively :—

Station.	Years recorded.	November to February.	March to May.	June to October.	Annual average.
Hooghly ...	37—40	2·43	9·89	45·71	58·03
Serampore ..	29—30	2·44	8·52	48·22	59·18
Arambagh ..	29—30	1·95	8·15	48·76	58·86
Average	...	2·27	8·85	47·56	58·69

## CHAPTER II.

## HISTORY

FROM the configuration of the district, a low lying tract, traversed by numerous rivers with a series of marshes between them it may be presumed that its earliest inhabitants were tribes of fishermen and boatmen. This supposition is confirmed by the predominance, down to the present day, of fishing castes like the Kaibarttas and the Bāgdis. The former, indeed, can be traced to very early times, their name being found in the *Manu Samhitā* and the two great Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*, and also in the colloquial form of *Kīcā* in Asoka's Pillar Edict V. The Bāgdis seem to have been an aboriginal tribe of West Bengal, whose origin is indicated not only by their non-Sanskritic name and their peculiar features, but also by certain customs to which they still adhere and by their low position in the Hindu social scale. The Kaibarttas predominate in the south, the Bāgdis in the north and west; while the Sadgops are also found in strength in the western tracts, where they may have migrated after the Bāgdis.

At the dawn of history this part of the country was probably included in the territory held by the Suhmas, a tribe mentioned in juxtaposition with the Angas, Vangas and Pundras in the *Mahābhārata* and also in the *Mahābhāṣya*, a grammar dating back to the second century B. C. In the epic the Suhmas are said to have been born of the queen of Bali by the blind Brāhman sage Dirghatamas, while according to the *Ayārāṅga-sutta*, one of the oldest Jaina scriptures, *Subba-bhūmi*, or Suhma-land, was a part, apparently the eastern part, of *Lādha* (Sanskrit *Rādhā*). These references, fragmentary though they are, afford some grounds for the belief that the land had been colonized by Aryans, including Brāhmins and other high castes, long before the birth of Christ.\*

There can be no doubt that in the third century B. C. the territory of the Suhmas was included in the vast empire of Asoka

\* For detailed references to Suhma and Rādhā, see M. M. Chakravarti, *Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal*, J. A. S. B., 1908, pp. 284-287.

which extended over the whole of Bengal as far as the mouths of the Ganges and up to Tāmralipti (the modern Tamluk). They may indeed have been subdued before this by Asoka's grandfather Chandragupta, or even earlier by the Nandas, for in 326 B. C. Alexander was informed of the power of the Gangaridæ and Prasii, whose king had under him a force of 20,000 horse, 200,000 foot, 2,000 chariots and 3,000 or 4,000 elephants. The capital of the Prasii was at Pataliputra (Patna) in Magadha; and the Gangaridæ occupied all the country about the mouths of the Ganges. They are mentioned by Virgil in the third Georgic, and Ptolemy describes their capital, Gange, as an important seat of commerce on the Ganges. According to some, the site of this capital was at Sâtgaon though the theory does not appear very plausible. However this may be, the tract included in the present district must have shared in the civilization of the Mauryan empire, though no remains of that time have survived. The road to Kalinga probably passed then, as later, through thâna Goghât or a little to the west of it; and it is most likely that a number of Brâhmins and other high castes migrated here from up-country, and that a few Buddhists and Nigranthas (Jainas) also settled in the land.

Several centuries later this tract became absorbed with the rest of Bengal in the Gupta empire, owing to a successful campaign by Samudragupta in the fourth century. The record of this conquest is contained in an inscription on the Iron Pillar of Delhi, which asserts that "when warring in the Vanga country, he confronted and destroyed the enemies confederate against him."\* A century later we find the Suhmas distinctly mentioned in Kâli Dasa's poem *Raghuvansa* (c. 480-490 A.D.), which, in describing the conquests of Raghu, says that "from him, the rooter-out of the unbent, the Suhmas saved their lives by following a cane-like course, as against a river torrent".† This reference to canes bending before the stream is quite appropriate to such a tract of reed-bordered marshes and rivers as Hooghly and the adjoining districts.

On the disruption of the Gupta empire the Suhmas apparently became independent, the *Dashumāracharita*, or story of the ten princes, stating that the Suhma kingdom extended so far south that it included Dāmalīpti and the sea-coast.‡ In the beginning of the seventh century, it appears to have been conquered by the powerful king of Bengal, Sasanka of Karnasuvarna (Gang); and

LATER  
HINDU  
PERIOD.

\* Smith's *Early History of India*, (1906) p. 275.

† *Raghuvansa*, IV, 85.

‡ Sixth *Uchchhāta*.

a few years later, in the second quarter of that century, it became a part of the great empire of Silāditya Harshavardhana. The name Suhma, however, was apparently unknown to the Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsiang), who, in describing his travels in the middle of the seventh century, mentions only two kingdoms in south-west Bengal, viz., Karnasuvarna and Tāmrālip-ti. It appears, however, occasionally in later Sanskrit works, the latest reference being in the *Pacanadūtam*, a work of the 12th century, which mentions Vijayapuri (probably Nadiā) as its capital.\*

The name Rādhā now superseded Suhma as a common designation for Western Bengal. Rādhā, we know, was subdivided into a northern and southern tract, each probably with a separate ruler, and Hooghly would naturally fall within South Rādhā. According to three Tāmil inscriptions, the great Chola emperor, Rājendra-chola Deva, is said to have conquered South Rādhā with its king Ranasūra in 1021-23 A.D.,† but this alleged conquest cannot have been more than an inroad, as no traces of Chola domination have been found, and South Rādhā is mentioned as a kingdom in the *Prabodha-chandrodayam*, an allegorical drama composed at the end of 11th century.

In the 12th century Chodaganga of the Eastern Ganga dynasty followed up his conquest of Orissa by invading South-West Bengal. According to inscriptions, he defeated the king of Mandār,‡ the Sanskrit form of Mandāran in thāna Goghat, and apparently annexed his country, which included Tamluk. The northern and eastern part of the district, however, passed into the hands of the Sena kings of Bengal, for the *avanadūtam* distinctly puts Suhma, with the sacred Tribeni, under Ballāla Sena.§ The Dāmodar, therefore, must have then formed the south-western boundary of the Sena kingdom.

The country remained under Hindu rule for some time longer, escaping the raid made on Nadiā by Muhammad-i-Bakhtyār Khilji in 1199 A.D. By 698 H (1298 A.D.), however, the northern part of the district had passed into the hands of the Muhammadan conquerors; for Zafar Khān's mosque at Tribeni bears that date, and his Madrasa is dated a few years later. Tribeni, and afterwards Sātgaon (Sanskrit Saptagrām) was the head-quarters of the local Muhammadan governors; and the importance of the latter place was recognized by its being

EARLY  
MUHAM-  
MADAN  
RULE.

\* M. M. Chakravarti, J. A. S. B., 1906, pp. 46, 58.

† *South Indian Inscriptions*, I, p. 96; II, 106-07; *Mysore Arch. Sur. Rep.* for 1908-09, para. 70, p. 17.

‡ M. M. Chakravarti, J. A. S. B., 1908, p. 110.

§ M. M. Chakravarti, J. A. S. B., 1906, pp. 44, 58.

made a mint-town: the earliest existing coin minted at Sātgaon is dated 729 H. (1329 A.D.).\* Its importance may also be gathered from the fact that when in 1338 A.D. Fakhr-ud-din Muḥārak Shāh rebelled and killed Kadr Khān, the Governor of Lakhnauti, one of his first steps, after sacking that town and plundering the treasury, was to secure possession of Sātgaon as well as of Sunārgāon.† Local legend asserts that about this time a Muhammadan warrior saint, named Shāh Safi-ud-din, overcame the Hindus under the chiefs of Panduā and Mahānād, and in 1340 erected a *minār* at Panduā to commemorate his victory. There is nothing improbable in the date ascribed to the *minār*, but the legend has not been corroborated by any authentic account, and is at variance with the fact that the Muhammadans had been in possession of the country as far south as Tribenī before 1298 A.D. In any case, however, their sway did not yet extend beyond the Dāmodar; for according to the palm-leaf chronicles of the Jagannāth temple at Purī, the Ganga kingdom was bounded on the north by the river Danei Budhā (the Jan Perdo of Europeans), an old form of the name Dāmodar. The subdivision of Arāmbāgh and the part of the Serampore subdivision lying south of the Kānā Dāmodar were, therefore, included in Orissa.

In the time of the Delhi Emperor Muhammad Shāh Tughlak (1324-51), Muhammadan Bengal was divided into three sub-provinces with head-quarters at Lakhnauti, Sātgaon and Sunārgāon, Sātgaon being placed under Izz-ud-din Yahyā Azam-ul-Mulk. Subsequently, when the Sultāns of Bengal had acquired independence, the three sub-provinces were reunited under Sikandar Shāh, the second of the line (1358-1390); but Sātgaon continued to be the seat of a local Governor and a mint-town.‡ It is not known whether it acknowledged the rule of the Hindu usurper, Rājā Kansa *alias* Ganesh (1409-1415), but it certainly was a part of the kingdom of his son and successor Jadu *alias* Jalāl-ud-din Muhammad Shāh (1415-1430). Mahmud Shāh I, who overthrew Kansa's grandson, continued to be in possession of Sātgaon, and according to two inscriptions of his reign, his son, Prince

\* *Catalogue of the coins in the Indian Museum*, 1907, Nelson Wright, Vol. II page 58, No. 324; *List of coins in the Lahore Museum*, Roger, p. 89, No. 2. For a silver coin of 730 H., minted at Sātgaon, see Thomas' *Chronicles of the Pathān Kings*, p. 214, and *Indian Museum Catalogue*, II, p. 53, No. 325.

† Elliot, III, 248.

‡ For three silver coins of Sikandar Shāh minted at Sātgaon, see *Catalogue of the Indian Museum Coins* (Bengal), Sir James Bourdillon, vol. II, p. 155, Nos. 56 to 58.

§ Two silver coins of his minted at Sātgaon are described by Sir James Bourdillon in the *Catalogue of the Indian Museum Coins*, (Bengal), vol. II, p. 160-2, Nos. 99 and 100.



Barbak Shāh, was its Governor in 1456, while Tarbiyat Khān built a mosque there in 1457.

The extent of the Sātgaon governorship varied according to vigour of the Governors, but generally speaking the Dāmodar formed the boundary until the time of Husain Shāh (1493-1520), when its limits were extended beyond that river. According to the biographies of Chaitanya, the Yavana rule spread westwards up to the Mandeswarī river, and southwards up to Pichhaldā on the Rūpnārāyan, and they speak of the destruction of temples and of the dread created by the Yavana king, which put a stop to travel in the western part of Hooghly. We also know that one of Husain's generals, Ismail Ghāzi, seized the fort at Mandaran, where there is still a tomb ascribed to him; so that almost the whole of the district was included in Husain Shāh's kingdom.

During the weak rule of Husain Shāh's descendants, the extent of Muhammadan territory was gradually reduced, until the last king Mahmud Shāh III was overthrown by Sher Shāh in 1536. That vigorous monarch subdivided Bengal into several sub-provinces, each with a separate governor and all under the control of Kazi Fazilet. This system was, however, abolished by Sher Shāh's son Islam Shāh, on whose death in 1552 Shams-ud-din Muhammad Shāh Ghazi, the Nawab of Bengal, became independent and occupied Sātgaon.\* Troubled times followed. Bengal was seized by the Afghān Governor of Bihar, Sulaimān Karārāni; while Tehunga Mukunda Harichandan, the last independent Hindu king of Orissa, conquered South-Western Bengal up to Tribenī. Ultimately, in 1567-68, Sulaimān's army attacked the king of Orissa while at Tribenī, and forced him to retreat to Fort Kotsama, probably the modern Kotsimul on the west bank of the Dāmodar. Sulaimān's son, Bayazid, and his general Illahabād Kalāpahār, then invaded Orissa through the hilly country known by the generic name of Jhārkhand. Internal revolt having broken out, the Orissa king hurriedly retired southwards and was killed while fighting the rebels. After this, Sulaimān's army overran Orissa and annexed it as far as the Chilkā lake. The name of the conqueror still survives in the town of Salimābād on the Dāmodar and in *Sarkar Sulaimānābād*; but his chief claim to fame is perhaps the skill and vigour with which he consolidated the Muhammadan power in the newly conquered territory.

THE  
AFGHANS.

\* For a silver coin of Shams-ud-din, dated 962 H. (1554 A. D.) and minted at Sātgaon, see J. A. S. B., 1880, p. 84, pl. VI, No. 8.

The Afghān rule collapsed, however, in the hands of his son, the handsome but inefficient Dāūd Shāh. Having defied Akbar, he was forced to fly from Patna to Sātgaon, and was next decisively defeated at Mughalmāri near Takroi in the Midnapore district, a battle which secured for the Mughals the sovereignty of Bengal. On the death of Akbar's governor, Munim Khān, Dāūd again revolted, but was defeated, captured and executed at Agmahāl, his head being sent to the Emperor (1576). The conquest was still far from effective, for the formidable rebellion of the military *jāi dārs* soon broke out; and the Afghāns in Orissa took advantage of it to invade South-West Bengal. Their leader, Katlu Khān, defeated Mirza Najat Khān, the Governor of Sātgaon, who fled to the Portuguese at Hooghly, and for four years Burdwān and Midnapore, with the intervening subdivision of Arambagh, became the theatre of war between the Afghāns and Mughals. Ultimately peace was concluded, leaving Katlu in possession of Orissa.

In 1590, hostilities were resumed by Man Singh, the Governor of Bihār, who invaded Orissa, advancing through Burdwān and halting at Jahānābad till the rains were over. Thence he sent a detachment southwards under his son Jagat Singh, who was defeated; but Katlu having died, a peace was again patched up. Another war followed in 1592, when Mān Singh, marching through Jahānābad, routed the Afghāns near Midnapore and annexed the whole of Orissa.\* In 1600, during the temporary absence of Mān Singh at Ajmir, the Afghāns under Usmān once more revolted and, having defeated the imperialists, occupied the whole of South-West Bengal. Man Singh hurried back, defeated the Afghāns at Sherpur Atai in Birbhūm, and forced them to retire to Orissa.† There was thus almost incessant warfare for a quarter of a century, and it is not surprising that Akbar's historian Abul Fazl gave Bengal the name of *bulgharkhanda*, meaning the 'home of revolts.'

The district of Hooghly did not escape the horrors of war, for the Arambagh subdivision (with the adjoining parts of Burdwān and Midnapore, through which the royal road passed) was frequently ravaged. A graphic description of the anarchy and oppression prevailing has been left in the introduction to the poem *Chandi* by Kavikankan, who towards the end of the 16th century was forced by the exactions of the tax collectors to migrate from his home in the Burdwān district

\* *Abdurnabi*, Elliot, VI, 86, 89-90; *Tarikh-i-Akbari*, Elliot, V, 465.

† *Do.*, Elliot, VI, 98; *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blochmann, I, 341.

to Aradā in Midnapore district, then under a Hindu chief Inland trade was at a standstill; the coinage was debased; the lands lay uncultivated, though taxes were still forced from the people; revenue and rents were screwed up to a high figure and on non-payment both landlords and tenants were forcibly seized, beaten and thrown into prison; life and property were insecure. On the other hand, the tract lying along the river Hooghly, being farthest from the high road to Orissa, escaped the ravages of the opposing factions, and was comparatively unmolested. Here trade, especially trade with European countries, flourished; and it was during the Afghān rule that the Portuguese settled at Hooghly and established the first European settlement. This subject will be dealt with in the next chapter.

• During the long and strong administration of Mān Singh (1590-1606) the Afghāns were gradually brought under control, and the larger Hindu zamindārs reduced to submission. Peace being restored, Todar Māl's rent-roll—in itself only a compilation from older rent-rolls with slight changes—was enforced. The Hooghly district was now divided between three *Sarkars*, viz., Satgāon, Sulaimānābād and Mandāran.\* Satgāon town, although its importance was diminishing with the decline of its trade, still continued to be the seat of the local governor, but was gradually superseded as a commercial centre by Hooghly with its large Portuguese trade. The latter trade, however, received a fatal blow in 1631, when the Emperor Shah Juhān gave orders for the destruction of the Portuguese settlement, the fort being captured and the survivors deported to Agra. From this time Hooghly became the royal port of Bengal, and the Governor's headquarters were removed there from Satgāon.

THE  
MUGHAL  
RULE.

For more than a century after this (i.e., until 1739) the district, with the rest of Bengal enjoyed comparative peace and prosperity. Cultivation extended, and trade increased in spite of the exactions of the higher officials and the frequent interference of their subordinates. The inland tracts were opened out, and the price of food grains became at times extraordinarily cheap, rice being sold in the time of Nawāb Shāista Khān at two annas per maund † The sea-borne trade also flourished, for though the Portuguese commerce had fallen off, the English, French, Dutch, Danes, Flemish and Germans all had settlements on the banks of the Hooghly. The general prosperity of the country may be gathered from Bernier's account "In a word, Bengale abounds with every

\* *Ain-i-Akbari*, Jarrett, II, pp. 140-1.

† *Diwān-e-Salātīn*, Bible. Ind., translation, p. 228.

necessary of life ; and it is this abundance that has induced so many Portuguese, half-castes, and other Christians, driven from their different settlements by the Dutch, to seek an asylum in this fertile kingdom. The Jesuits and Augustins, who have large churches and are permitted the free and unmolested exercise of their religion, assured me that Ogouli alone contains from eight to nine thousand Christians, and that in other parts of the kingdom their number exceeded five-and twenty thousand. On both banks of the Ganges, from Rajmahale to the sea, is an endless number of channels, cut, in bygone ages, from that river with immense labour, for the conveyance of merchandise and of the water itself, which is reputed by the Indians to be superior to any in the world. These channels are lined on both sides with towns and villages, thickly peopled with Gentiles " Elsewhere, Bernier in describing his voyage from Pipli to Hooghly, remarked—" My eyes seemed never sated with gazing on the delightful country through which we passed."

There is, however, a reverse side to the picture Bernier himself says that the Firinghi or Portuguese pirates of Chittagong "scoured the neighbouring seas in light galleys, called galleasses, entered the numerous arms and branches of the Ganges, ravaged the islands of Lower Bengale, and, often penetrating forty or fifty leagues up the country, surprised and carried away the entire population of villages on market days, and at times when the inhabitants were assembled for the celebration of a marriage, or some other festival The marauders made slaves of their unhappy captives, and burnt whatever could not be removed " The account given by a Muhammadan historian, Shihâb ud-dîn Talish, at the end of the 17th century, would seem to show that Hooghly could not have escaped the raids of the Magh and Firinghi pirates, for he mentions Hooghly, with Jessore and Bhushnâ, as places plundered by them when they moved up the Ganges.\*

Except for such raids, the internal peace of the district was only twice disturbed. The first occasion was in 1686-89, when war broke out between the British and the Mughals. There was some fighting in the town, but the British, after a temporary success, abandoned their factory, and the rest of the campaign took place outside the district. Ten years later a serious rebellion broke out. Subhâ Singh, a zamindâr of *paraganas* Chitwâ and Bardâ in the Ghâtâl subdivision of the Midnapore district, becoming dissatisfied with the government, joined hands with

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\* *The Feringi Pirates of Chittagong*, J.A.S.B., June 1907, p. 424.

Rahim Khān, an Afghan chief of Orissa. Their levies marched through the Arāmbagh subdivision to Burdwān, slew the Rājā, Krishna Rām, in battle, and seized his family and property. The rebels next took Hooghly and spread over West Bengal, capturing Murshidābād, Cossimbazār, Rājmahal and Māldā.

The fall of Hooghly was due to the cowardice of Nurullah Khān, *Faujdar* or military commandant of Hooghly, Jessore, Burdwān and Midnapore, who, it is said, had long employed himself in commerce and amassing wealth, and possessed nothing of the military character but the name. When ordered by the Nawāb to attack the rebels, he, after a long delay, gathered together some troops, marched from Jessore and crossed the river. On the approach of the Afghāns, he retreated, and, having shut himself up in the fort of Hooghly, implored assistance from the Dutch governor of Chinsura. The rebels, convinced by this pusillanimous conduct that they had little to fear from the "merchant soldier," advanced boldly and lay siege to Hooghly. So persistent and vigorous were their attacks, that the *Faujdar*, alarmed for his personal safety, fled across the river at night, and made his way to Jessore. The garrison, finding their commandant had fled, opened the gates, and the rebels got possession of the city without loss.\*

Shortly afterwards the rebels were driven from Hooghly to Sātgrān by the fire of two ships which the Dutch governor sent up; but by March 1697, they held the whole country west of the Hooghly river, and were closely investing the fort at Tanna. Their successes soon came to an end. Subhā Singh was stabbed to death by the daughter of Krishna Rām, when he sought to outrage her. The imperial army, hurriedly gathered together under Zabardast Khān, son of the Nawāb Ibrāhim Khān, defeated Rahim Khān at Bhagwāngolā in May 1697, and pursued him to Burdwān. In the meantime, Ibrāhim Khān had been recalled and Prince Azim-us Shān appointed in his stead, upon which Zabardast Khān retired to the Emperor's camp in the Deccan. Rahim Khān, taking advantage of this respite, made fresh incursions into Burdwān, Hooghly and Nadiā. He next attacked the prince's camp in the outskirts of Burdwān, but was killed in the battle which ensued. His followers were then hunted down, until the land was cleared of the Afghan raiders.†

This period witnessed several important administrative changes. ADMINIS-  
Three settlements of land revenue took place, viz., (1) in the TRATIVE  
CHANGES

\* C. Stewart, *History of Bengal* (1847), p. 207.

† *Biglari-i-Saltānā*, pp. 231-42; Stewart, *History of Bengal* (1847), pp. 206-212.

second half of Prince Shah Shujā's rule (1649-58), (2) in the time of Murshid Kuli Khān (*circa* 1722), and (3) in Shujā-ud-dīn's time (*circa* 1728). The first made no material change in Todar Mal's rent-roll, but radical reforms were introduced by Murshid Kuli Khān. He divided Bengal into 13 *chaklas* instead of *sarkars*, the *parganas* being retained, but in some cases subdivided. Under this arrangement Hooghly district fell under two *chaklas*, Hooghly or Sātgaon and Burdwān. In the revised rent-roll of Shujā-ud-dīn's time, the country was divided into *khalsā* lands consisting of (1) large and small zamindāris and *rayar* or customs, etc., and (2) the *jāgirs* of the *Faujdar*s. Hooghly district was apparently divided between the large zamindāri of Burdwān, and the small zamindāris of Mandalghāt, Arsā and Muhammad Animpur, and was assessed to *rayars* of *baksh-bandar*, i.e., port dues and ground rents.\*

The Emperor Aurangzeb, always suspicious of his proconsuls, set up a dual government in Bengal by appointing a Diwān. The military and political administration was controlled by the Nawab Nazim; but the revenue and financial administration was placed in the hands of the Diwān, who was appointed directly by the Emperor. Both were to be guided by rules and regulations laid down in the *Dastur-ul-Amal*, i.e., a code of procedure periodically issued under the Emperor's orders.† This dual government was practically abolished in 1707, when the Diwān Murshid Kuli Khān secured the post of Deputy Nāzim, and ceased a few years later when he became Nawāb Nāzim of Bengal and Orissa. Bihār was added to Bengal in the time of Nawāb Shujā-ud-dīn, who divided his satrapy into four divisions:—(1) West Bengal, (2) East Bengal, (3) Bihār and (4) Orissa. The first division the Nawab kept under his direct charge; and each of the other divisions he placed under a Deputy Nāzim.‡

HOOGHLY  
Faujdar,      Hooghly was under a *Faujdar* or Military Governor assisted by a *Naib* of the Diwān, called the Comptroller of Customs, or the Deputy Governor, in the English Factory records. The following *Faujdar*s of Hooghly can be traced. Malik Beg was in charge from 1647 to 1667,§ but apparently not continuously, for in 1664 we find one Muhammad Sharif, who was deputed to fortify Sangrāmgarh before the conquest of Chittagong by Shajista Khān,||

\* J. Grant's *Analysis of the Finances of Bengal*, Appendix to the *Fifth Report of the Select Committee*, 1812, Madras, pp. 246-72.

† *Ityān-u-Salātīn*, pp. 247-48.

‡ *Ityān-u-Salātīn*, p. 303, Note 2.

§ Thomas Downey, *Countries Round the Bay of Bengal*, p. 153, Note 1.

|| *The Feringhi Pirates of Chittagong*, J. A. S. B., June 1907, p. 48'.

described as the late *Faujdar* of Hooghly. Malik Kāsim, the son of Malik Beg, was twice Governor, viz., in 1668-72, and again in 1674-81. He is referred to unfavourably in the English records for having interfered with their trade and exacted money from them.\* He seems to have been succeeded by "Suffede" Mahmud, whom William Hedges, the English Agent, met at Dacca in November 1682.† The latter was probably replaced by Malik "Burooardar" (Barkwardār), who threatened to proceed against Hedges on a complaint made by one Thomas Haggerston in November 1684,‡ and was subsequently deputed by the Nawab to negotiate with Job Charnock. The *Faujdar* at the time of the first 'eruption' of the English in Hooghly town (October 1686), was Abdul Ghani.§ and in June 1704 one Mir Ibrāhīm was the Governor|| In the middle of 1708, Zā-ud-dīn Khān (Zeaude Cawn of the records), was appointed Governor direct by the Emperor and took charge in May 1710.¶ He was friendly to the English and other Europeans, but was on bad terms with Murshid Kuli Khān, who selected Mirza Wali Beg as *Faujdar* on his own authority. The two took up arms to support their claims, the struggle ending in the defeat of Wali Beg.\*\* Eventually, Zā-ud-dīn retired in June 1713, on being transferred to Coromandel as Diwān.

In 1713, Mir Nasir became the Governor. In February 1714 he received from the British the value of Rs. 500 in goods at prime cost, "it being a custom of many years' standing to give presents once a year to the persons in the Government at Hugly, and those now there (though we gave them nothing last year) having been always friendly and obliging to us and ever worked so as to get the stops on our trade taken off". A few months later we find him demanding the surrender of the family of a recalcitrant zamindār, Sitārām, then hiding in Calcutta. The demand was promptly complied with by the English, but his present was reduced next year to Rs. 350 †† In the time of Murshid Kuli Khān, another *Faujdar*, Ashan-Ullah Khān, attacked the Bankibazar factory of the Ostend Company in 1723 and captured it.‡‡ Of this Governor a story is told that he had a

\* Thomas Bowrey, *Countries Round the Bay of Bengal*, pp. 183, note 2, 185, note 1.

† *Diary* of William Hedges, Yule, I, p. 46.

‡ *Do.*, Yule, I, 164.

§ *Do.*, Yule, II, 54.

|| *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Wilson, I, 252.

¶ *Do.*, *Do.*, I, 329, 332.

\*\* *Diary of a Soldier*, 263-4; *Early Annals*, I, 341, II, 4, etc., 28, etc.,—378.

†† *Early Annals*, II, 116, 139, 160, 166, 168, 212.

‡‡ *Diary of a Soldier*, 376-78; Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies*, 1797, II, p. 19.



favourite *Kotwal* (the city police officer), who enticed away the daughter of a Mughal. Ashan-Ullah Khān tried to screen him, but the Mughals complained to the Nawāb, Murshid Kuli Khān, who had the *Kotwal* stoned to death.\* Ashan-Ullah Khān was transferred by order of the next Nawāb, Shujā-ud-dīn, who conferred the post on an old friend Pir Khān *alias* Shujā Kuli Khān. The new *Faujdar's* rapacity brought him into collision with the English, Dutch and French, and is said to have ruined the port of Hooghly. On one occasion his confiscation of some English goods led to the despatch of British troops from Calcutta.†

LAST  
DAYS OF  
MUGHAL  
RULE.

The *Faujdar* last named held office till 1740, when he took part in the battle of Gheriā, throwing in his lot with the Nawāb Sarfarāz Khān, against the ambitious Ali Vardi Khān. The victory of the latter won for him the mastery of Bengal, and ushered in 25 years of war, during which the land had little peace. He followed up his victory by marching through Arāmbagh and Midnapore to Orissa, where he defeated Murshid Kuli Khān II, Governor of Orissa and Sarfarāz Khān's brother-in-law, and then seized that province. Shortly afterwards Mir Habib, with the adherents of Murshid Kuli, revolted and imprisoned Ali Vardi Khān's Governor, whereupon the Nawab again marched south and quelled the rebellion. While marching leisurely back, he was met and surrounded at Burdwān by a Marāthā army under Bhāskar Pandit. He lost most of his baggage, artillery and tents, and his half-starved army had to cut their way through to Kātwā. The Marāthās then spread over West Bengal, one body seizing Hooghly.

Mir Habib had for some time been negotiating with the merchants of Hooghly, and in particular with two named Mir Abul Hasan and Mir Abul Kāsim, who were on familiar terms with the Governor. These two merchants helped Mir Habib in the stratagem by which he took the town. Coming one night when the fort gates were closed, they sent word that they had important news for the Governor. On this, the gates were opened and Mir Habib with 15 men got in and seized the Governor. They then sent word of their success to a Marāthā general, Sib Rao, who was waiting close to the town with a body of troops. Sib Rao at once marched on Hooghly, which quietly submitted, and was appointed Governor of the town. "This expedition having produced much money, which arose from contributions or from the revenues of the country or from the port duties of so celebrated a mart, the Marāthā General commenced perpending all the consequences and all the value of his sojourning in Bengal, and he resolved to make Kātwā

\* *Dighe-e-Saltān*, p. 234.

† *Dighe-e-Saltān*, pp. 234-35.



his headquarters. From that time Mīr Habīb became his Prime Minister; and that transfuge, who was a very active man, used to transact business sometimes at Kātṡā and sometimes Hooghly.\*"

In October 1742 Bhāskar Pandit, who had begun to collect revenue from the zamindārs, was defeated at Kātṡā by Ali Vardi and driven out of Bengal. Next year Bhāskar's master, Raghuji Bhonslā of Nāgpur, and Bālaji Rāo, the head of the Marāthās at Poona, advanced to Bengal with large armies, both of which mercilessly plundered the towns and villages of West Bengal. All Vardi bought off Bālaji and then advanced with him against Raghuji, who fled before the combined force. In 1744 Bhāskar Pandit returned. The Nawab invited him and his generals into his tent at Mānkara under the pretext of discussing a treaty and had them murdered; he then routed the disorganized Marāthā forces and drove them out of Bengal.

No sooner was Ali Vardi Khān free from the menace of the Marāthās than he had to face a formidable revolt of his own Afghān officers, who broke out, headed by his Commander-in-chief, Mustaphā Khān. The Bhonslā chief also, enraged at the murder of his general, sent a fresh force under his son Jānoji, which conquered Orissa, and again ravaged West Bengal and South Bihār. After several years of guerilla warfare Ali Vardi Khān, wearied by constant warfare and his extreme old age, made peace with the Marāthās in 1751, ceding to them Orissa up to the banks of the Subanarekhā river and agreeing to pay 12 lakhs of rupees as *chauth* for Bengal. From this time till his death in 1756 the land had a little breathing space; but in the meantime the wars had caused immense destruction of life and property. A shadow of the terror inspired by the *Bargis*, as the Marāthās were called, still lingers, for the name is used by Bengali mothers to frighten their children to quietness.

The successor of Ali Vardi Khān, the hot-headed young Sirāj-ud-daulā, declared war against the English, the quarrel ending in his capture of Fort William and the massacre of the Black Hole. In January 1757 Colonel Olive and Admiral Watson, having come up from Madras with a considerable force and reoccupied Calcutta, sent an expedition against Hooghly, which sacked the town. After an indecisive battle they forced the Nawab to make a treaty, and next attacked and captured the French fort at Chaudernagore. In June of the same year the battle of Plassey made the British supreme in Bengal. After this the district had peace with the exception of one short

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\* *Seis-al-Matāharin*, Vol. I, pp. 294-5.

interlude in 1759, when an English army under Forde met and defeated a Dutch force at Biderrah near Chandernagore.

The secret treaty with Mir Jāfar Khān, accepted by him on June 3rd, 1757, laid down in its twelfth clause that the "Moors" should not fortify the river below Hooghly;\* and the actual cession of the district to the British was the result of the secret compact concluded by the Calcutta Council under the Governor, Mr. Vansittart, with Mir Kāsim Ali Khān, son-in-law of Mir Jāfar, by which they agreed to put him in executive charge of the Nizāmat. Its fourth and fifth clauses stipulated that the Company should keep up a standing army for the defence of the government and the provinces, and that to keep up the said force the countries of Burdwan, Midnapore, Chittagong, and half the annual produce of lime at Sylhet should be ceded to the Company in perpetuity.† Though the treaty was signed on the 27th September 1759, the ceded lands did not become subject to the Company till a year later, viz., in September 1760.‡ The Hooghly district, which was then included in *Chakīd* Burdwan, thus passed finally into the hands of the British;‡ though their *de facto* possession was not ratified *de jure* till August 1765, when the Emperor Shāh Alam made a perpetual grant of the *darani* of Bengal, Bihār and Orissa. The Nizāmat, or rather the criminal branch, remained under the Nawab up to 1772, when Hastings transferred the central authority to Calcutta.

*Faujdhars.*

There is little record of the *Faujdhars* of Hooghly during the last days of the rule of the Nawābs. When Ali Vardi Khān seized the throne, he put his step-brother, Muhammad Yār Khān, in charge of Hooghly port; and it was his deputy, Mir Muhammad Rezzā, who was imprisoned by the Marāthās in 1742. The Marāthā Governor Sib Rāo, appointed in his place, did not stay long, for on the defeat of Bhāskar Pandit he retreated to Bishnupur in October of the same year§. In February 1757 the well-known Nanda Kumār was Diwān and acted as *Faujdar* of Hooghly. Mr. Watts, through Umichānd, offered him Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000, on condition that he gave no assistance to the French—a condition fulfilled by him—and later on dangled before him the prospect of being confirmed permanently as

\* S. C. Hill, *Bengal* in 1553-57, Vol. II, p. 184.

† Grose, *Voyages*, Volume II, p. 463.

‡ J. Grant's *View of the Revenue of Bengal*, pp. 474-478. "This gives on p. 481, a list of the *perganas* included in Lord Clive's *jāgir*, in which no part of Hooghly district was included, as suggested in Toynbee's *Sketch*, p. 30, § *Diwān*, p. 343 and note 1, p. 347.

*Faujdar*.\* Watts apparently could not carry out his promise, and at the critical time of Clive's march to Plassey, Sheikh Amin-Ullah was Governor of Hooghly. Clive threatened to destroy Hooghly, if he was opposed, on which Amin-Ullah tamely submitted.† Muhammad Umar Beg Khān was *Faujdar* in 1759, and was directed by Mr Jāfar to assist the English against the Dutch.‡ Ten years later the *Faujdar* of Hooghly invested the Dutch fort at Chinsura, both by land and water, for non payment of custom duties. The blockade lasted ten days and was raised at the intervention of the English Government, on the request of the Dutch Council, which promised to pay the amount due.§

After 1760 there were a number of administrative changes. BRITISH  
ACR. The Company at first confined themselves to the collection of revenue and left the criminal administration to the native government at Murshidābād. The revenue collections were made by a Superintendent, Mr. Johnstone, who was in charge of Hooghly as well as Burdwan, and then by Supervisors, of whom Mr. Verelst was one in 1765.|| The Chhota Nawāb, Muhammad Rezā Khān, was in charge of the Nizāmat, being represented at Hooghly by a *Faujdar*. In 1772, the Court of Directors notified their intention "to stand forth as Diwān;" and Warren Hastings then swept away the system of dual government. Bengal and Bihar were divided into six *zilas*, each under a Collector, aided by a native officer called Diwān, the Collector combining in himself the powers of Collector, Judge and Magistrate, and also having control over the police. Of the *zilas*, Calcutta was one and Burdwan, including Hooghly, was another.¶ This system having proved a failure, the administration of civil justice was transferred in 1774 to *Amils*, and the control of the police and criminal work to *Faujdar*s, appointed at Murshidabād by the Nāib Nāzim, Muhammad Rezā Khān, who was placed in charge of the Court of Nizāmat Adālat. For this purpose Bengal was divided into fourteen districts, of which Hooghly was one. In 1780 the system was again changed. In each of the six divisions a separate civil court was set up under a European Judge, who in 1781 was vested with the powers of a

\* Hill, *Bengal* in 1756-57, II, 228, 294, 317, 386. Busteed calls him Governor of Hooghly (*Echoes from Old Calcutta*, p. 68), but he was only Diwān.

† Hill, *Bengal* in 1756-57, II, 407-8. He was appointed about 10th May 1757; see Siraj-ud-daulā's letter to Clive, II, 377-8.

‡ Broome's *History of the Bengal Army*, p. 263.

§ J. T. Stavorinus, *Voyages to the East Indies*, Volume I, Chapter V, pp. 115-19.

|| J. Grant, *Views of the Revenues of Bengal*, pp. 474, 476.

¶ Fifth Report of the Select Committee, 1813, pp. 4-6, 8-9.

Magistrate, while the establishment of *Faujðars* and *thandðars* was abolished.\* Khān Jahān Khān was the last *Faujðar* at Hooghly and is said to have been granted a pension of Rs. 250 a month †

The Hooghly district lay mainly in the Burdwan Collectorate; but the riverain strip from Sātgaon to Uluberia (besides a small tract round Nayāsarāi), with the Saraswati as the western limit, formed a separate Collectorate under Hooghly, in combination with Hijili and Tamruk in Midnapore, and all the 24-Parganas except the Barāsāt subdivision.‡ By a notification, dated the 29th March 1787, a new arrangement followed a reduction of establishment, and the river strip was added to Nadiā § Under Regulation XXXVI of 1795, *siā* Burdwan was divided into two parts, each under a separate officer, the northern division being called Burdwan and the southern division Hooghly, to which the riverain strip was added The Hon'ble C. A. Bruce was the first Judge-Magistrate

In 1809 the Judge-Magistrate of Hooghly was placed in charge of the three foreign towns of Chinsura, Chandernagore and Serampore as "Superintendent and Commissioner," and in 1820 we find that the district included a large part of the present Midnapore extending down to the sea and comprising Hijili and Tamruk and also part of the 24-Parganas with Diamond Harbour and Falts.¶ The Collectorate of Hooghly was not separated from Burdwan until 1st May 1822,¶ Mr. W. H. Belli being the first Collector The judgeship was made a separate office in 1826, when Mr. D. C. Smyth became the first Judge. The earliest Magistrate's name traced is that of Mr. (afterwards Sir) Frederick James Halliday, who held this post in 1829 and was subsequently the first Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal In 1859, a few years after his appointment to that high office, the posts of the Magistrate and the Collector were combined.\*\* Under Government Order No. 268, dated the 27th February 1843, the Magisterial charge of Howrah became distinct from that of Hooghly.†† The subdivisions were first established in 1845, one at Dwārkhātā (Serampore) and the other at Khirpai (Arāmbāgh).‡‡

\* Fifth Report of the Select Committee 1812, pp. 4-6, 8-9.

† S. C. Dey, *Hooghly Past and Present*, pp. 62-72.

‡ Rennell's Atlas, Plates I, VII and IX (1778-79).

§ *Selections from the Calcutta Gazette*, pp. Vol. I, 285-86; *Toynbee's Sketch*, p. 22.

¶ J. C. Price, *Notes on the History of Midnapore* (1876), pp. 26-27.

¶ *Toynbee's Sketch*, pp. 20-22.

\*\* *Crawford's Hooghly Medical Gazetteer*, Ch. XIV, pp. 512-4.

†† *Toynbee's Sketch*, pp. 22-23.

The antiquarian remains in the district are few in number and not of any great age. No early Hindu remains have yet been discovered. How far this loss is due to the ravages of the rivers, and how far to the iconoclastic zeal of the Muhammadans, cannot be determined, but old places like Panduā, Nayāsarāi, Tribenī, Sātgaon, Mandāran and Kotsimul (a village on the border) must have contained temples and monasteries. Among recent remains, not older, however, than 2 or 3 centuries, may be mentioned the Saiva temples at Uttarpārā, Tārakeswar, Tribenī and Khānakul, the Śakta temple of Hansewari at Bānsberīā, the temple of Vishnu at the same place (one of the oldest in Bengal dating back to 1679), and the Krishna temples at Mahesh and Ballabhpur in Serampore, at Guptipārā, at Baxā on the Saraswati, and at Krishna-nagar on the Kānā Dwārakeswar. These temples are mostly of the Bengal type of architecture, i.e., a cubical body with arched verandahs, above which rises a curvilinear roof, drawn down at the ends like a Bengali thatch of bamboo.\* The Hansewari temple at Bānsberīā is an exception, being modelled after the Benares pattern; it was built, in fact, by masons from North India. It is a large temple, cruciform in plan, six storeys in height with 13 cupolas, of which the central one is the highest. Among other remains the series of *ghāts* on the Hooghly river deserve mention. The oldest existing of them is probably that at Tribenī, which is attributed to the last Hindu king of Orissa (1560-68 A.D.)

ARCHÆ-  
LOGY.Hindu  
remains.

The oldest Musalmān remains—indeed the oldest authentic remains in the district—are found at Tribenī, Panduā and Sātgaon. The ruins at Tribenī consist of (1) an *āstānā* with two enclosures, one of basalt stone and the other of sandstone containing tombs said to be those of Jāfar Khān and his family; (2) a mosque to the west of it with low basalt pillars supporting the arches and several domes above, built by Jāfar Khān in 1298 A.D. Both appear to have been built from materials obtained from old Hindu temples.† Panduā contains the tomb of the saint Shafi-ud-dīn, opposite which is a tall *minār*, about 120 feet high, in five storeys, with a circular staircase inside; north-west of the *minār* there is a large mosque of brick with long rows of cloisters. The *minār* seems to have been modelled after the celebrated Kutab Minār of Delhi, and to have been used as a tower for calling the faithful to prayer. Sātgaon has very few remains except some old tombs and a mosque of small bricks, of the later Pathān style, erected by Saiyad Jamāl-ud-dīn. These remains are attributed to the 14th century. There

Muham-  
madan  
remains.

\* For Bengali temples, see M. M. Chakravarti, J. A. S. B., 1906, pp. 141-162.

† For mosques, see M. M. Chakravarti, J. A. S. B., 1910, pp. 33-52.

are also traces of old Muhammadan forts at Pandua, Sâtgaon, Hooghly and Mandāran.

Christian  
monu-  
ments.

Hooghly is one of the very few districts in Bengal containing Christian buildings of any age. The oldest are the Augustinian Church at Bāndel (rebuilt in 1660) and the Armenian Church of St. John the Baptist in Chinsura (completed in 1697). Other old churches are the Roman Catholic Chapel (1740) and the Dutch octagonal church at Chinsura (1744), the Roman Catholic Chapel at Serampore (rebuilt after 1776), and the Danish Church at the same place which was completed in 1805. Among other old public buildings may be mentioned the Hooghly and Serampore Colleges, the barracks and Dutch Governor's house at Chinsura, and the ruins of the magnificent house of the French Governor at Ghiretti.

## CHAPTER III.

## EARLY EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS.

THE Portuguese were the first European nation to establish settlements in Bengal, but they were not the first European travellers in the country. More than half a century before Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and arrived at Calicut on the south-western coast of India (1498), an Italian nobleman, Nicolo Conti, had visited Bengal, where he saw the towns of Cernove and Marazia,\* returning to Venice in 1444 after an absence of 25 years. Another Italian, Ludovico Di Varthema, also travelled in Bengal about 1505.† Both these pioneers have left descriptions of the country and its products. Nicolo Conti entered the mouth of the river Ganges, and sailing up it, came at the end of fifteen days to a large city called Cernove (*Cernouem* in text). "This river," he said, "is so large that, being in the middle of it you cannot see land on either side." He asserts, indeed, that in some places it is 15 miles in width. "On the banks of this river there grow reeds extremely high and of such surprising thickness, that one man alone cannot encompass them with his arms; they make of these fishing boats, for which purpose one alone is sufficient, and of the wood or bark, which is more than a palm's breadth in thickness, skiffs adapted to the navigation of the rivers. The distance between the knots is about the height of a man. Crocodiles and various kinds of fishes unknown to us are found in the river. On both banks of the stream there are most charming villas and plantations and gardens, wherein grow vast varieties of fruits, and, above all, those called *Musa*, which are more sweet than honey, resembling figs, and also the nuts which we call the nuts of India.‡

EARLY  
EUROPEAN  
TRAVEL-  
LERS.

\* Text in Ramusio, *Delle Navigazioni et Viaggi*, 1563, Venetia, Vol. II, translation by J. W. Jones.

† Text in Ramusio, Vol. II, translation by J. W. Jones, 1863. Varthema left Europe about 1502, and printed his work in 1510.

‡ Text, Ramusio, II, page 389, translation pp. 9-10. The plants referred to are bamboo, plantains and coconuts.

"Having departed thence, he sailed up the river Ganges for the space of three months, leaving behind him four very famous cities and landed at an extremely powerful city called Marasia, where there is a great abundance of aloe wood, gold, silver, precious stones and pearls. From thence he took the route towards some mountains situated towards the east, for the purpose of procuring those precious stones called carbuncles, which are found there. Having spent thirteen days on this expedition, he returned to the city of Cernove, and thence proceeded to Buffetania. Departing thence, he arrived, at the end of a month's voyage, at the mouth of the river Racha [Arakan]".

Ludovico Di Varthema describes his travels as follows:—"We took the route towards the city of Banghella (Text, *Banghalla*, *Bangla*'), which is distant from Tarnasari (Teasserim) seven hundred miles, at which we arrived in eleven days by sea. The city was one of the best that I had hitherto seen, and has a very great realm. The Sultan of this place is a Moor and maintains two hundred thousand men for battle on foot and on horse; and they are all Muhammadans; and he is constantly at war with the king of Narsingha. This country abounds more in grain, flesh of every kind, in great quantity of sugar, also of ginger, and of great abundance of cotton, than any country in the world. And here there are the richest merchants I ever met with. Fifty ships are laden every year in this place with cotton and silk stuffs, which stuffs are these, that is to say, *barram*, *namone*, *lisati*, *ciantar*, *doazar* and *sinobaff*.\* These same stuffs go through all Turkey, through Syria, through Arabia Felix, through Ethiopia, and through all India. There are also here very great merchants in jewels, which come from other countries.

"We also found some Christian merchants here (Armenians)". ... "But before our departure from Banghella, we sold all the rest of the merchandise, with the exception of the corals, the saffron, and two pieces of rose-coloured cloth of Florence. We left this city, which I believe is the best in the world, that is, for living in. In which city the kinds of stuffs you have heard of before are not woven by women, but the men weave them. We departed thence with the said Christians, and went towards a city which is called Pegu, distant from Banghella about a thousand miles."†

Both Niccolò Conti and Ludovico Di Varthema appear to have sailed up the Padma or easterly branch of the Ganges, and not up the Hooghly: Banghella was either Chittagong or Sonárgaon,

\* Variants, *Barrami*, *Namone*, *Lisati*, *Ciantari*, *Doazar* and *Sinobaff*.

† Text, *Ramusio*, II, pp. 165-66, translation, pp. 212-13, 214, Ed. M. Ch. XIII and XIV.



while Cernove is identified with Shahr-i-Nau, i.e., the new city, a mint town named on the coins of Ilyas Shah and shown in Gastaldi's map (1561) a little to the north-east of Gaur. It is probably another name for Pānduā.\* The Moorish Sultan of Varthema was the powerful king of Bengal, Husain Shah, and the "king of Narasingha" was his opponent, Pratāparudra Gajapati of Orissa, who was then in possession of part of the territory of Vigānagara.

The first Portuguese to visit Bengal was Joao da Silveira, THE PORTUGUESE. who was despatched to the Maldives from Goa in 1517, seven years after that place had been captured and made his capital by Affonso de Albuquerque. After obtaining permission to build a fort and capturing two richly laden ships of Cambay, he proceeded to Chittagong in 1518. Here he was joined by Joao Coelho, who had been sent by Fernando Perez de Andrade as an envoy to the King of Arakan (called the King of Bengal by Sousa), who then held Chittagong. Silveira failed, however, in his mission, for a young Bengali on board his boat told of his capture of the two Indian vessels. He was denounced as a pirate and sailed away discomfited.† The next Portuguese to reach the shores of Bengal was one Martin Affonso de Mello Jusarte, who in 1528 was sent on a voyage to the Far East. He was even more unfortunate than his predecessor, for in crossing the Bay of Bengal his ship was wrecked. De Mello, with some companions, escaped and made his way along the coast to Chakiriā, south of Chittagong, the capital of a petty governor named Khudā Baksh Khān. Khudā Baksh imprisoned the ship-wrecked mariners but promised to release them if they would fight his enemies. The Portuguese did so, but failed to secure their release; and an attempt to escape resulted in the death of one and the closer confinement of the others. Eventually, through the good offices of a merchant of Chittagong, named Khwāja Shahābuddin (Xabadin of the Portuguese historians), Jusarte was ransomed and arrived at Goa in 1530.‡

Khwāja Shahābuddin now entered into negotiations with Nuno da Cunha (Viceroy from 1529 to 1538), promising to obtain permission for the King of Portugal to build a fort at Chittagong. Da Cunha, at once closed with the offer; and in 1534 De Mello was sent back with five ships to Chittagong, which was then under the Bengal King. The Portuguese had a friendly reception, being

\* M. M. Chakravarti, *Notes on the Geography of Old Bengal*, J. A. S. B., May 1903, p. 282.

† F. C. Danvers, *The Portuguese in India*, Vol. I, p. 240.

‡ R. S. Whiteway, *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, pp. 222-3.

allowed to smuggle in goods, though the custom duties were over 30 per cent *ad valorem*. De Mello then sent some of his party with presents to Gaur, where Mahmūd Shāh III held his court with such state, that, we are told, 10,000 women attended him. Unfortunately for the success of the mission, among the presents were some cases containing perfumes taken from a Muhammadan vessel, with the names of the owners still attached to them. The angry king not only refused the presents, but sent orders to have the Portuguese seized and their goods confiscated. The Governor of Chittagong invited Affonso and his chief officers to a banquet and took them unawares. Some were killed and some escaped to their ships, while De Mello and the other prisoners were taken to Gaur.

Hearing of their capture, the Viceroy Nuno da Cunha sent Antonio da Silva Menezes to rescue them with 350 men in nine vessels. From Chittagong Antonio forwarded a letter of the Viceroy with presents to the King at Gaur, but received no reply for a long time. He concluded that his messengers had been made prisoners, and proceeded to burn down Chittagong and other places on the coast. Couto's account, however, says that the king demanded £15,000 as ransom, and that this demand being scouted as exorbitant, Chittagong was fired in revenge. When, in 1537, Sher Shāh revolted and besieged Gaur, the King released the Portuguese prisoners and, aided by them, repelled the attack. At the same time Rabello arrived with three ships to demand the release of the captives. Mahmūd, securing the co-operation of the Portuguese, led them with his army to Teliāgarhi near Colgong, where he was defeated by the forces of Sher Shāh. Pleased with their prowess, Mahmūd applied to the Viceroy of Goa for further aid, and this was given; but when Perez de Sampaio came with nine vessels, he found Gaur in the hands of Sher Shāh and Mahmūd dead.\*

According to Correa, Rabello visited Satgāon in 1535 while on this mission. His account gives an insight into the audacity characteristic of the Portuguese. "In this year", he writes, "Diogo Rabello, finishing his term of service as Captain and Factor of the Choromandel fishery, with license from the Governor, went to Bengal in a vessel of his. . . and he went well armed along with two foists, which he equipped with his own money, the Governor only lending him artillery and nothing more. . . So

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\* Blochmann, J. A. S. B., 1873, pp. 298-9; Whiteway, *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, pp. 223-4; Darven, *The Portuguese in India*, Vol. I., pp. 422-3; Stevens, *The Portuguese in Asia*, 1895, Ch. IX, pp. 418-20.

this Diogo Rabello arrived at the Port of Satigan, where he found two great ships of Cambaya, which three days before had arrived with great quantity of merchandise, selling and buying: and these, without touching them, he caused to quit the port and go down the river, forbidding them to carry on any trade, and he also sent one of the foists, with 30 men, to the other port of Chatigan, where they found three ships from the coast of Choromandel, which were also driven away from the port. And Diogo Rabello sent word to the Govil that he was sent by the Governor with choice of peace or war, and that he should send to ask the King if he chose to liberate the (Portuguese) prisoners, in which case he also would liberate his ports and leave them in their former peace." This appears to have been the first visit of the Portuguese to the Hooghly district.

In spite of their first reverses, the Portuguese, daring pirates and adventurous traders, pressed on in their attempts to secure the trade of Bengal, and by the end of the 16th century the Bay swarmed with their galleys. Their chief posts in Bengal were *Chatigan* (Chittagong) on the Bay, and *Satigan* (Satgaon) on the river Hooghly, called, respectively, Porto Grande and Porto Piqueno, i. e., the great haven and the little haven. In the Hooghly river their large ships came up to Bator (in the modern city of Howrah), while smaller ships went up to Satgaon bringing "rice, cloth of Bombast of diverse sortes, lacca, great abundance of sugar, Mirabolans dried and preserved, long pepper, oyle of Zerzeline, and many other sorts of merchandise"† In the port of Satgaon 30 or 35 ships were laden every year, and most of them were Portuguese; while Federici (who left Italy in 1563 and returned home in 1581) found no less than 18 Portuguese ships at Chittagong. "From the great port of Chatigan", he wrote, "they carry for the Indies great store of rice, very great quantities of bombast cloth of every sort, sugar, corn, and money with other merchandise."

Federici's account makes it clear that along the Hooghly the traders got their goods at the temporary markets called *hats*. "Every year at Buttor they make and unmake a village with houses and shops made of straw, and with all things necessary to their uses, and this village standeth as long as the ships ride there, and till they depart for the Indies, and when they are departed, every man goeth to his plot of houses, and there setteth fire on them, which thing made me to marvel. For as I passed

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\* Quoted under "Satigan" in Hulse-Johnson.

† C. Federici, Purchas, V. 421, 429